Exploring the social capital grid
Bonding, bridging, qualitative, quantitative
Svendsen, Gunnar Lind Haase; Patulny, Roger

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Title: Exploring the Social Capital Grid: Bonding, Bridging, Qualitative, Quantitative (Revised version 7-8-06)

Abstract:
There has been a proliferation in social capital studies over the past decade. Many of these have accepted and promoted the theoretical distinction between bonding and bridging social capital (Woolcock 1998, Putnam 2000). However, when it comes to empirical measurement, these and most other studies still tend to agglomerate social capital into the one catch-all concept (Putnam 2000), or else measure only bonding (Granovetter 1973, Coleman 1988, Portes 1998) or bridging (Inglehart 1999, Paxton 1999), but not both at the same time. Furthermore, a broad sweep of the literature shows that few studies distinguish social capital research on the basis of methodology, between qualitative and quantitative approaches. There are thus concerns with bonding and bridging as empirical constructs, and qualitative and quantitative approaches to measuring them. No review paper to date captures the intersection between these four components clearly. Such a paper would show the state of the research in a new light, and refocus the task of measuring social capital. This paper reviews definitions and applications of bridging and bonding social capital, classifies empirical studies according to each network type, and produces a further breakdown according to methodological approach. The result is a four-part ‘grid’, useful for focussing social capital research. Though primarily interested in review, this paper does suggest a tentative pattern, whereby most qualitative research tends to focus upon small networks relevant to bonding social capital, whilst most quantitative analysis looking at civic networks and norms of trust relevant to bridging social capital. This review is not comprehensive enough to assert such a finding with certainty however, and relegates such a task to future investigations.
1. Introduction

Social capital research is advancing, and has consolidated around an understanding of social capital as norms and networks of social cooperation. Originally formulated by sociologists (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990), the social capital concept has been taken up within economic (e.g., Sobel, 2002; Dasgupta and Serageldin, 2000) and particularly political scientific (e.g., Putnam, 2000) theory and research. Certain problems with the concept remain unresolved though, despite the rise and cooling off of theoretical debate since the famous dispute in The American Prospect in 1996 (e.g., Putnam, 1996; Portes and Landolt, 1996).

Problems with the social capital concept have been well discussed (e.g., Portes, 1998, 2000; Kadushin, 2004), and largely reflect those captured by sociologists such as Portes and Landolt (1996). They can be summarized as a lack of conceptual clarity, issues with causality and measurement, and ignorance as to the ‘downside’ of social capital. Their intransigence is mainly due to the failure of empirical research to keep up with theoretical developments in building up a body of research that addresses the issues of concept (what measures what?), causality (what leads to what?) and the downside of social capital (what are the negative consequences of what)? However, empirical researchers face the daunting task of trawling through a morass of research into ‘the one’ social capital concept each time they undertake research, as mirrored in the many World Bank publications on social capital (e.g., Dasgupta and Serageldin, 2000; Grootaert and Bastelaer 2002). We think that, in many cases, a failure to cut their task down to size by integrating the distinction between bonding and bridging networks into their research may be a key factor in such empirical lags. Most studies still tend to agglomerate social capital into the one catch-all concept (Putnam 2000), or else measure only bonding (e.g. Granovetter 1973, Coleman 1988, Portes 1998) or bridging (e.g. Inglehart 1999, Paxton 1999), but not both at the same time. So too might a more conventional failure to summarise literature on the basis of methodological approaches, and develop research agendas accordingly.

In Bowling Alone, Putnam (2000) uses the bridging/bonding typology, though not in any strictly systematic way. He defines ‘bridging’ social capital as open networks that are “outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages” (op.cit.: 22), while ‘bonding’ social capital consists of “inward looking [networks that] tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups” (ibid.). The latter implies family and friend care but also, in extreme cases, ‘superglued’ networks based on aggressive exclusion and harmful to society; that is, excessive bonding, such as in the instance of the KKK (Putnam, 2000: 21ff.).

The idea of ‘openness versus exclusivity’ links to the distinction raised by Portes and Landolt (1996) between positive and negative social capital. Positive social capital derived from social control is typically found in the form of what Portes (1998: 10) calls ‘rule enforcement’, ‘bounded solidarity’ and ‘enforceable trust’, which generates positive outcomes fairly equally for all members of a group. Negative social capital also involves enforceable rules, but generates negative outcomes for the group (e.g. downward-leveling norms), or positive outcomes for some members at the expense of others (e.g. Mafia). Given the more tightly structured and exclusive nature of bonding social capital, it is likely that more negative aspects will be associated with such capital.

The bridging/bonding distinction is thus important and useful, allowing us to
simultaneously capture both the dynamics of openness within civil society, and closure within small exclusive groups in a way that is not possible with a single, aggregated social capital concept. There is a third kind of social capital that might register for distinction as well – linking capital – which Woolcock (1998) develops and is meant to links formed by communities with economic, political, and social institutions. However, placing such a form of capital on a par with the bonding and bridging concept seems contentious, as ‘linking’ is not so clearly a part of everyday social interaction. Linking overlaps with other concepts such as confidence in government and democratic performance. Such murky conceptual and empirical boundaries make classification of this concept difficult and at this stage, probably premature. We have chosen here to focus just upon bridging and bonding as fairly clear and important distinctions in social capital, and leave a similar classification of linking until such a time as concept and measurement become clearer in the future.

In this paper, we review definitions and applications of bridging and bonding social capital. We begin with a theoretical examination of the extent to which the bonding/bridging social capital distinction is a viable tool for research. We then present research applications of social capital, showing how most qualitative research focuses on bonding and most quantitative on bridging (Section 3). The bonding/bridging distinction, with appropriate theoretical input from economic, political and sociological works, can be used to clarify the role of social research. We note that qualitative fieldwork tends to focus on the micro-formation of non-excludable and excludable goods (Svendsen, 2006) and quantitative analysis tends to focus on the positive and negative externalities of social capital at the macro level (Patulny, 2004). We finish with a conclusion discussing the implications of such a grid typology for future research and policy strategies (Section 4).

2. Contentious Capital

2.1 Social Capital and Trust – Different Networks, Different Research Methods

The problem of avoiding the inclusion of ‘every indicator under the sun’ in the concept and measurement of social capital is diminishing with the emerging consensus that social capital is comprised of networks and norms of trust and cooperation (eg. see Putnam 2000, Winter 2000, OECD 1999). The idea of social networks is fairly intuitive and easy to translate to measurement; measures such as memberships in voluntary organisations, or number and strength of network ties are appropriate and have been used in analysis (Paxton 1999, Granovetter 1973). Trust is a more confusing entity however, and deserves some more particular attention. Recent works (e.g., Sobel, 2002; Herreros, 2004) suggest that multidisciplinary approaches to social capital should be done by operationalising social capital as trust, that is, trust in and, subsequently, willingness to co-operate with other people. However, this brings up differing conceptions of trust, the question of how they fit into bonding and bridging models, and the repercussions this has for research approaches.

There is debate within social capital analysis over whether trust is a strict historical norm (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000) or a rational choice based on information (Dasgupta, 1988; Gambetta, 1988). The economists’ rational-choice perspective is that a lack of information concerning other people undermines trust. This is the subject of the famous Prisoner’s Dilemma scenario, a trust game where two prisoners are separated and asked to confess their mutual crime (see e.g., Herreros, 2004: 44ff.). However, sociologists such as Luhmann oppose the rational choice perspective, arguing that we
trust when we lack information, that is, when we have no other choice. For Luhmann, trust’s primary ‘function’ is to cope with the increasing social complexity and uncertainty characteristic of the post-industrial/modern society.

Patulny (2004) suggests that there are two different types of trust that match the differing motivations behind economic and sociological conceptions of social capital. The two types of trust identified loosely follow Uslaner’s distinction between generalised and particularised trust (Uslaner, 1999; Uslaner, 2002), and Mansbridge’s idea that people trust more than is rationally appropriate out of a sense of moral attachment and ‘doing the right thing’. Patulny argues that generalised trust is normative, and related to morals and faith in others rather than information. An example of generalised trust in action is in the Scandinavian welfare societies (Norway, Denmark, Sweden), where children are socialized into a strong ‘belief’ in the righteousness of cooperative behaviour and social trust. Such norms are deeply rooted in early 19th century democratic traditions and strong civic movements, which have encouraged cooperative activities and non-corrupt government institutions (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2004, 2006; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005: 57-58). Particularised trust on the other hand is linked to information and experience with specific other people (Uslaner, 2002), and ties in with economic conceptions of rational trust (Patulny, 2004). Thus, a low-trust country like Brazil (which exhibits some of the lowest generalised trust scores in the World Value Surveys) which is characterized by high levels of corruption, inequality and non-cooperative behaviour between isolated groups of poor and rich, who seldom interact would find it rational to trust in-group members and distrust outsiders.

For these reasons, the two kinds of trust promote the distribution of different kinds of resources. High levels of generalised trust in a nation allow different people to meet, interact, and share in common or ‘non-excludable’ goods such as low criminality, non-corrupt and efficient governmental institutions, and low transaction costs in the provision of public services – people work with the system, not against it. Particularised trust tends to transform non-excludable into excludable goods, with better quality of services and information transmitted along private personal lines than public ones. This is not to demonise particularised trust and private goods. Most often, it is beneficial to society that citizens trust their family members and best friends and exchange information and services with them. However, too much in-group trust may lead to the destruction of non-excludable public goods, such as in the case of criminal networks, terrorist cells, or groups of poor who do everything they can to prevent each other from social mobilisation (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Nannestad, Svendsen & Svendsen, 2007).

Such differing forms of trust require different networks to take effect, and would seem to mandate the need for different approaches to measuring social capital. Particularised trust most probably lines up with bonding social capital, and closed groups serving their own interests through the accumulation of private goods. Such groups would be characterised by subtle dynamics of power and exclusion, dynamics which are likely only accessible through qualitative methods of investigation. Generalised trust on the other hand lines up with bridging social capital and open (civic) groups promoting public goods. Such widespread social activity, involving macro norms and interactions (national and international values and practices), can usually only be captured through quantitative analysis of large-scale social surveys. If these theories hold true, we might see a ‘natural’ dichotomy in social capital research appearing – qualitative
investigations into bonding, and quantitative investigations into bridging social capital. The apparent naturalness of this dichotomy could obscure alternative research directions, leading them away from possibly fruitful qualitative investigations into bridging (e.g., in-depth interviews with people about how they meet strangers), and quantitative analysis into bonding (e.g., survey questions asking about relations and exchange amongst close friends and family). This is where the usefulness of reviewing social capital in a ‘grid’ of research becomes apparent. It helps to tell us if we are doing all we can to advance the study of social capital in the most comprehensive and imaginative ways possible, or if we are largely missing potential research options.

A further caveat needs to be addressed. The arguments summarised so far could be read to indicate that bridging is typically always ‘good’, whilst ‘bonding’ is bad – the source of all intolerance and exploitation within and between groups – and that quantitative research consequently focuses on positive outcomes whilst qualitative research is preoccupied only with the negative. These unrealistic conclusions are examined next.

2.2 Is bonding always ‘bad’? Possibilities and dangers in the ‘binary’ system of bonding and bridging

Bonding and bridging networks and actions should typically follow the motivations proscribed by the different forms of particularised and generalised trust. A potential problem arises however in the binary nature of this distinction between bonding and bridging. The technique of classifying human practice by use of a binary opposition is rooted in the Lévi-Straussian structuralist tradition within anthropology. It is a popular technique that can make understanding easier. However, it also risks simplification and reduction in analysis.

There are clear advantages, but also potential dangers in the bridging/bonding binary classification. One advantage of bridging/bonding is that it captures the diffuse nature of social networks in a manner that transcends concepts from distinct academic disciplines. Other approaches such as Social Network Analysis (SNA) focus on (quantifiable) structural features, such as income, gender, etc – as illustrated by Ronald Burt’s (2000) structural holes approach – and capture bonding-power dynamics. They tend however to miss macro-level social bridging, as demonstrated in a failure to integrate SNA with the study of civic society. Social capital studies containing bridging/bonding might be closer in form to New Economic Sociology (NES) and New Institutional Economics (NIE), which include macro-level analyses.¹ A second advantage is that the bridging/bonding distinction serves as a critique of the dominant “celebratory view of social capital” popular in the 1990s (Portes and Landolt, 1996: 21). The bridging/bonding conceptual pair offers a theoretical framework that acknowledges social capital as capable of both collective good and evil, involving both positive and negative externalities.

However, the strength of the bridging/bonding distinction can also be its weakness if researchers and policy makers assume the two are strictly mutually exclusive. Portes goes to some lengths to modify a rigid plus-minus classification by pointing out the simultaneous existence of negative and positive types of social capital in a society, as two qualities within the same network (Portes, 1998: 20) Social geographer Colin Williams (2005: 261) warns against a too rigid use of “a key binary hierarchy [such as the one] between bridging and bonding social capital”. “What is so wrong with having

¹ There are, of course, exceptions such as Nan Lin’s attempts to link SNA and social capital (Lin 1999, 2000, 2001). For a review and comparison of SNA and NIE literature, see also Richter 2001.
deep relationships with other individuals rather than fleeting acquaintances?” he asks rhetorically, advocating for a bridging/bonding approach that does not privilege bridging, and enables analyses of more ‘impure’ and complex, empirical data on bonding, for example (ibid.). Here, Williams refers to Derrida’s ‘binary hierarchies’ that “lock mind-sets into particular ways of thinking” (ibid.) by conceptualisation, institutionalisation and legitimisation of binary relationships (e.g., Derrida 1981). Such hierarchies place not only bridging over bonding, but by extension, quantitative over qualitative methods, and it is certainly not our intention to suggest this implicitly with our idea of a social capital grid.

With this caveat in mind, the bridging/bonding distinction should facilitate the exploration of a combination of capital types – e.g. positive bridging, negative bonding – through a variety of empirical methods. Keeping an open mind about these possibilities then, we proceed by reviewing bridging/bonding literature. We examine each type of social capital in three parts - definitions and theories, qualitative research, and then quantitative research. Each examination is further made on the basis of the various contributions to the literature from political science, economics and sociology. We begin with a look at bridging social capital.

3. Bridging Social Capital
3.1 Bridging Definitions and Theories
Social capital owes its present popularity to political science. According to its most well-known proponent Robert Putnam (1993: 3), social capital is beneficial because:

A society that relies on generalised reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter. Trust lubricates social life.

Here Putnam is explicitly referring to social capital as a resource generated in civic society. Such reference clearly designates social capital as generalised and open. Whilst acknowledging the importance of both bonding and bridging, Putnam’s interest in civic society shows a clear preference for bridging social capital. Putnam enthuses about the importance of moving beyond “our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves” (Putnam, 2000: 411). The ‘bridging bias’ is reflected in other political theories, including the optimistic sentiments behind generalised trust (Uslaner, 2002), and outcomes such as the benefits of trust upon civilisation (Fukuyama, 1995), democratic participation (Harre, 1999) and confidence in political institutions (Norris, 2001), but also the problems of trust upon government accountability (Offe, 1999). Ostrom (1998) has developed common-pool resource management by including social capital in so-called ‘second generation’ rational choice models. These stress the importance of institutional settings, which, through sanctioning of cheaters, foster norms of cooperation and generalized trust.

Economic theories differ from those of political science, in that their focus on rational action gives them more of a ‘bonding bias’. Only Granovetter’s work (1973, 74) among the economists can be oriented explicitly to bridging, with his observation that weak ties facilitate communication, and therefore the beneficial flow of information and resources among groups.

Sociological research into bridging can be taken back to Durkheim (1984 [1893]) and organic solidarity based on the division of labour and shared interest. More recently,
Luhmann (2000 [1968]) and Barbalet (1998) implicitly link generalised trust to social complexity and emotion, whilst Coleman (1990) links it to cooperative social norms, and Giddens (1994) links it to confidence and the beneficial outcome of new forms of intimacy. Coleman’s contributions in particular suggest a ‘bridging bias’, in the ability for strangers to co-operate deriving from shared values and ultimately out of mutual trust in a society. Thus, in line with Putnam, Coleman sees social capital as both a private and collective good, the latter implying that social capital is produced (unintentionally) as a by-product, involving positive externalities (Coleman, 1988: 116ff.; Herreros, 2004: 23ff.).

3.2 Bridging Qualitative Research
Here we examine the contributions made to the study of bridging social capital though qualitative research. Political science qualitative research into both bridging and bonding social capital implicitly began with Putnam’s investigations in Italy published in Making Democracy Work (Putnam, 1993). After historically examining a range of issues including party politics, ideology, affluence and prosperity, social stability, political harmony, and civic movements, Putnam noted that the best indicator of failure in government was the absence of traditions of civic engagement in the south of Italy, a phenomenon captured in Enzo Mingione’s (1991) term ‘fragmented societies’. An example of a loss of strong bridging social capital can also be seen in the decline of associational life in the United States from 1969 until the present (Putnam, 1996, 2000). Likewise, Fukuyama (1995) has linked the historical accumulation of widespread trust and productive social capital to levels of institutional performance.

In economics, Glen Loury (1977) was one of the first to apply the word social capital in qualitative research. He did so to capture the reduced life possibilities he noted amongst blacks and ethnic groups in the United States, which he attributed to the lack of resourceful, inter-group networks (cf. Portes, 1998: 5). Within New Institutional Economics, we find works linking transaction cost analysis with qualitative research in the form of historical treatments of norms of trust (e.g. North and Weingast, 1989; North, 1990; Milgrom et al., 1990), though such works do not refer specifically to social capital. Granovetter (1985) emphasizes the embeddedness of economic transactions in ‘social networks’, in terms of the better employment prospects derived from ‘weak tie’ social network of friends, acquaintances and the like rather than ‘strong tie’ networks of kinship (Granovetter, 1973, 1974).

Within sociology, Canadian urban qualitative sociologists first used the concept during the 1950s in connection with studies of club memberships (Putnam, 2000: 19). In the 1960’s, urban sociologist Jane Jacobs applied the concept to denote neighbourhood networks as a resource for individuals and groups. Within immigrant sociology, Portes (1998: 10) identifies positive bonding social capital in examining a Vietnamese community in New Orleans, where everyone keeps an eye on one another, preventing a child being truanting from school, joining a street gang, etc. Whilst strictly a form of bonding, such efforts prevent immigrants from falling out with the wider society, and could this be categorised as bridging (though we run the risk of engaging in tautology if we make this claim too strongly). Another example of such beneficial bridging coming out of bonding social capital is that of Asiatic immigrant mothers in the United States, who not only remain at home with their children but also procure school textbooks in order to help their children with their homework (op.cit.: 11). In a similar vein, and using the case study of the American Industrial Areas Foundation, Warren (2001) describes the building of social capital of an inclusive nature, focusing on specific
organizational forms that enhance trust, cooperation and, ultimately, political influence.

In India, Krishna’s (2002) *Active Social Capital* outlines qualitative studies showing linkages between community development, economic growth, and levels of social capital in India. Social capital for Krishna, as for others in development circles (Grootaert and Bastelaer 2002; Woolcock, 1998, 2000), should be seen as a potential resource capitalized upon through the agency of competent leaders bridging between local and supra-local groups. Giri (2002) describes self-help movements in India as a tool for building inclusive networks, which encompass both rich and poor, and high caste and low caste. Ashutosh Varshney (2002: 11-12) uses a ‘intercommunal/ intracommunal engagement’ distinction very similar to the bridging/bonding approach in his survey of bloody riots between Hindus and Muslims in India, concluding that regular, interethnic face-to-face contact between Hindus and Muslims in the local associational life is the best guarantor for mutual trust.

Finally, qualitative anthropological fieldwork (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2003, 2004; Svendsen, 2006) measures the economic and social consequences of both bridging and bonding social capital in a rural Danish community from the mid 19th century till today. Decentralised bridging civic associations provide the best scope for contact across group cleavages while centralization tends to increase lack of inter-group contact and bonding, implying negative externalities. Also in anthropology, Robert Rotberg’s (2001) edited book *Patterns of Social Capital* offers complex historical analyses of network cooperation, largely to test Putnam’s findings in the US. Rotberg (2001: 8) argues that, overall, Putnam overplays the civic theme and hence oversimplifies history when arguing that a modern civic society was born in the Northern and Central parts of Italy after the 12th century. These conclusions are supported by the other contributors to the collection (e.g., Brucker, 2001; Pye, 2001; Muir, 2001; Grew, 2001; Rosenband 2001).

3.3 Bridging Quantitative Research

Political quantitative research into bridging social capital has been popularised with Putnam’s investigations into declining social capital in the US. Putnam has quantitatively linked declining voluntary activity with losses in health and well-being and increases in crime, and attributes the cause partly to changes in demographics such as age (generational change), and the employment status of women, but largely to increased television watching. Causality and tautology remain as problems in his research, however.

Following Putnam, political scientists have driven most of the quantitative research into trends and indicators of social capital. Inglehart (1999) and Uslaner (2002) note that trust is declining internationally in English speaking countries, and Wuthnow (2002) finds agreement with Putnam that social capital is declining in the US, although along class based lines. Literature on Canadian trends is less apparent, though trust levels are reported to be steady and not undermined by ethnicity, migration, and declining tolerance (Johnston and Soroka, 2001). Hall (2002) finds social capital volunteering is prosperous in Britain, though trust is declining, whilst Offe and Fuchs (2002) find it prospering in Germany.

Rothstein and Stolle (2002) find that social capital is prospering in welfare states such as Sweden, and attribute this to the Universalist nature of such systems. This finding is confirmed by the high levels of social capital in other Scandinavian welfare states, such
as Norway (Wollebeack and Selle, 2002) and Denmark (Paldam and Svendsen, 2006). Political scientists too link social capital empirically to a number of outcomes, including democratic participation and confidence in government (Paxton, 1999; Norris, 2001; La Porta, 1997), happiness and satisfaction (Veenhoven, 1996; Helliwell, 2002), and health (Kawachi et al., 1999).

Within economics, if we count management as a sub-field of economics, Onyx and Bullen’s (1997) examine social capital quantitatively in Australian communities using factor analysis, and find a coherent construct. Economic studies of social capital outcomes are numerous, however, the most prominent being Knack and Keefer’s (1997) landmark international study connects trust to higher levels of economic growth. Beugelsdijk and Smulders (2004) find that bridging capital relates positively to output even when allowing for the time lost from productive effort in socialising. Helliwell (2003) connects trust levels to patterns of migration in Canada, and links trust to satisfaction in international analysis. Other economic studies have connected trust to higher levels of equality (Schwabish et al., 2003). Economic studies make strong links between education and bridging social capital (Brehm and Rahn, 1997), particularly by way of raising tolerance.

Quantitative sociological investigations into bridging capital are also apparent, though less prolific than those of political scientists and economists. Patulny (2005) examines associations between welfare regimes and social capital internationally, finding positive associations between bridging social capital and universal social democratic welfare systems, and more negative associations between bridging and liberal systems. La Porta (1997), studying a wide range of countries, finds that an increase in trust by one standard deviation raises the percentage of high school graduates in the population by one-half a standard deviation. Halpern (2001) notes that a model incorporating self-interested values, economic inequality, and trust explains two-thirds of the variation in victimisation; social capital and increased trust provide the opportunity for increased crime. In Canada, Reimer (2002) examines social capital relationships in rural communities, in terms of the extent and use made of relations with the market, state bureaucracies, voluntary associations or communal forms such as families for support. Sociologists in Australia have found that trust levels are declining (Hughes et al., 2000), though volunteering levels are increasing (Bittman and Fisher, 2003). Stone and Hughes (2002) in particular find social capital levels are prosperous in Australia, though clusters of social capital among rich and poor are apparent. Stone et al. (2003) also links bridging capital to job and employment prospects.

The ways in which these various aspects of bridging social capital fit together – the disciplines, the theories, the research into indicators and outcomes, and the operationalisation into qualitative versus quantitative approaches – can be seen below in Table 1:

Table 1: Bridging social capital studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Political Science</th>
<th>Sociology/Anthropology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak Ties means communication flows better (Granovetter), brokerage across structural holes (Burt, Lin), institutional efficiency</strong></td>
<td>Generalised trust is an historical norm (Fukuyama), and morals (Uslaner, Mansbridge), civic association (Putnam),</td>
<td>Organic solidarity (Durkheim) confidence and new forms of intimacy (Giddens), trust is emotional and compensates for a lack of information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Bridging social capital studies
4. Bonding Social Capital
4.1 Bonding Definitions and Theories
We turn now to discuss bonding social capital, in terms of definitions and theories, and summarise the information by political scientific, economic and sociological discipline. With political science, only Uslaner and Portes theorise about bonding in the manner already discussed above. Uslaner (2002) examines experience and familiarity in particularised trust, and Portes and Landolt (1996) note the presence of downward levelling attitudes in closed communities as an outcome.

Economic theories focus directly upon rationality, information and familiarity derived from direct experience, which gives them their personalised ‘bonding bias’. Dasgupta (2000) concentrates upon rational trust, and the beneficial outcomes that flow from ‘rational’ bonding, such as reduced transaction costs among familiars. Olson (1982) focuses upon secure closed networks, in that special interest groups can cooperate to impose costs on non-members in pursuit of member’s interests, the gains being much greater in this regard than from cooperative action. Burt (2000) suggests that it is brokerage across the ‘holes’ between closed network structures that grants influence. This is a variation on the standard bonding theme, in that it is not network insiders who hold the greatest advantage, but the person who spans two or more networks and can mediate the interactions between them. This idea is captured in a similar fashion by Lin (2001) who notes that people use positions (their own and others’) in and between institutions and structures as ‘resources’. This might seem like bridging more than bonding, if it were not for the premise of each theory being that advantage is gained by actors manipulating closed networks. Burt, indeed, emphasises that brokerage is
predicated upon closure:

Structural holes are the source of value added, but network closure can be essential to realising the value buried in the holes. (Burt, 2000, Abstract)

In sociology, research into bonding (as with bridging) can be traced back to Durkheim, and his idea of mechanical solidarity based on familiarity. More recent research includes Coleman’s investigations into social actors making rational choices based upon their knowledge of others subscription to social norms and conventions. Coleman (1990) emphasises the influence not of the individual capital holder within the network, but of the trusted intermediaries that facilitate a network, creating specific networks of connections between individuals and institutions, which settle down over time to become social structures. Bourdieu (1979a, 1979b, 1986) gives probably the most critical perspective of social interaction centred upon networks, outlining a neo-capital theoretical framework, stressing individual benefits from networking in conjunction with he development of ‘cultural capital’. It is in this setting of reproduction of power relations within various fields that Bourdieu (1979a: 3) talks about “inherited social capital”:

The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinuous mechanical equilibrium between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects. (Bourdieu, 1986: 241)

Other sociologists, such as Lin and Portes, have further developed Bourdieu’s line of thought. Where Lin has worked on the social equality issue, stressing that access to more resourceful networks depends on the individual’s reputation, material wealth and hierarchical position (e.g., Lin 1999: 40), Portes (1998, 2000) has been more interested in the private good aspect and the complex interaction of positive and negative social capital. Also within sociological theory, there are Bittman and Fisher’s (2003) speculations concerning informal and voluntary time, and Woolcock’s (1998) and Stone’s (2001) conceptions of ‘bonding’ capital.

4.2 Bonding Qualitative Research

Political science qualitative research into bonding social capital can be dated back to Banfield’s ethnographic study of the village of Montegrano in Italy. Banfield attributed such distrust to poverty, asserting that when possessing nothing, there is no margin for the potential error (or risk) associated with trusting and being let down – one loses ‘everything’. He called this kind of social ethic “amoral familism”, where trust beyond the nuclear family becomes impractical on a day-to-day basis (Banfield, 1958). Banfield’s depiction can be linked to many classical anthropological case studies of anomaly or ‘antistructure’, including symbolic and violent struggles between various ethnic, religious and political groups (e.g., Douglas, 1966; Turner, 1967; Kapferer, 1988; Keesing, 1992; Tambiah, 1996; Varshney, 2002). More recently in political science, Banfield’s findings have been expanded upon in Putnam’s analysis of Southern Italy, and in Bowling Alone, Putnam notes how negative bonding social capital arises as an oppositional construct in religion: “proselytizing religions are better at creating bonding social capital than bridging social capital, and tolerance of unbelievers is not a virtue notably associated with fundamentalism” (Putnam, 2000: 410).

Qualitative research is rare within economics, with only Granovetter (1973)
investigating the suggestion that strong ties - akin to bonding – close off the contacts with the wider group, and thus avenues of advancement. The Svendsen study (2006) points at the outcomes of excessive bonding: widespread distrust, prejudices, nepotism, a lack of co-operation, group isolation, social poverty and neighbourly conflicts. The outcomes of such excessive bonding included drastic increases in doctor and psychologist visits, early pensioning, children with social problems and, not least, more public casework. Their study concludes that excessive bonding social capital carries substantial costs, both socially and economically.

Qualitative political science studies into bonding social capital have proliferated in Eastern Europe. For example, Stephenson (2001) notes that social capital works in negative and positive ways in post-communist Russia, both supporting groups of children on the streets of Moscow, but also enabling and supporting the Russian Mafia. The negative social capital heritage can be traced to the Communist era, as in Poland (Chloupkova et al., 2003) and Romania (Almond, 1991; Coplin and O’Leary, 2001; Ivanes, 2005), but harmful bonding can also be traced historically in countries with democratic traditions, such as Denmark in the decades following World War II (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004).

A qualitative sociological approach can be traced back, ironically, to investigations in economic history. Karl Polanyi (1957 [1944], 1968) identified three historical forms of economic integration – market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity. Here, Polanyi found reciprocity in symmetrical non-Western and often kinship-based groups, involving particularized trust within a small group akin to bonding social capital. Contemporary sociological research linking social capital to crime (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1997) finds that disadvantage, lack of social efficacy, and a lack of residential stability link to crime results and perceptions. Portes examines negative social capital in mixed race areas, where industry and white middle-class families “have left the remaining population bereft of social capital” (Portes, 1998: 14). He also provides the example of Puerto Rican drug dealers in New York, whose efforts to keep one another within the drug milieu extend to accusations of treason towards those who attempt to mix with whites as a form of upward social mobility (op.cit.: 17). Similarly, Boissevain reports on a village community in Malta, where neighbours know everything about everyone, and where the demand for participation in joint activities ultimately leads to a demand for conformity. The curtailed freedom of action, which follows from this, can help explain “why the young and the more independent-minded have always left” (in op.cit.: 16). Giorgias (2000) finds stories of social exclusion working against second generation migrants in Australia, a result of a lack of social capital connecting them to wider Australia.

4.2 Bonding Quantitative Research
There is little available quantitative political science research into bonding capital. Within economics, Durkin (2001) suggests that it is bonding, not bridging, that produces prosperity. He finds that in the US, income gains via human capital are positively related to frequency of contact with family and friends, but bridging measures of trust and membership do not affect income levels. However, in opposition to this, Beugelsdijk and Smulders (2004) find in their analysis of EVS data that bonding capital relates negatively to bridging capital and regional economic output. Alesina and Glaeser (2004) link race and ethnic homogeneity to trust and the strength of welfare states; homogeneity makes strangers more familiar and easier to trust, and thus increases the
likelihood of sympathy and support for welfare on their behalf. However, this emphasis on familiarity is more synonymous with a bonding rather than bridging pathway.

The most famous sociological studies that could be classified as bonding are probably Bourdieu’s analysis of class and closed groups (1984) and Coleman’s examination of human capital and education created through social capital in local communities (1988). In Australia, Stone and Hughes (2002) also undertake a detailed quantitative analysis of bonding capital, noting that trust levels among families are typically much higher than trust among strangers, but that bonding in the form of family trust neither adds to nor detracts from bridging social capital, or generalised trust. Finally, time use researchers, typically sociologists, have undertaken studies of socialising and informal care in Australia (Bittman and Pixley, 1997, Bittman and Fisher 2003), the UK (Ruston 2003), and the US (Robinson 1997), under the heading of social capital, which would appropriately fit in the study of bonding rather than bridging social capital.

The ways in which these various aspects of bonding social capital fit together – the theories, the research into indicators and outcomes, and the operationalisation into qualitative versus quantitative approaches – can be seen below in Table 2:

### Table 2: Bonding social capital studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Political Science</th>
<th>Sociology/Anthropology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory of Bonding Social Capital</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust based on information and rational choice, Prisoner's dilemma, reduced transaction costs (Dasgupta), Reduced information from outside familiars (Granovetter), brokerage across structural holes (Burt, Lin)</td>
<td>Particularised trust, information, experience (Uslaner)</td>
<td>Trust, from rational knowledge of social structures and subscription (Coleman) closed groups delineated by cultural capital preserves class inequality (Bourdieu), downward levelling norms (Portes), inward bonding (Woolcock)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative Bonding Research</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonding mechanism as means to bridging (Onyx and Leonard) closed groups secure rewards (Olson), historical reciprocity (Polyanyi)</td>
<td>Amoral familism (Banfield), Support/Care and Mafia Crime in Russia (Stephenson), Poland (Chloupkova), Romania (O’Leary, Ivanes)</td>
<td>Immigrants in US (Portes), Malta (Boissevain), and Australia (Giorgias), educational performance and closures (Coleman), distrust between groups (Varshney, Svendsen) and harmful bonding in Denmark (Svendsen and Svendsen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative Bonding Research</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal time activities (Ruston)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bonding in Australia (Stone), class and distinction in France (Bourdieu), Welfare reduction (Patulny), informal care time (Bittman and Fisher, Patulny)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conclusion

The bridging/bonding distinction within the social capital agenda appears to offer much promise. It should secure a more exact measurement of social capital as both a non-excludable and excludable good at all levels. On the basis of this review of bridging/bonding literature, we suggest that – in respect to policy recommendations – a harmonious mix of bridging/bonding social capital seems to be the solution, as has been suggested previously with different co-authors (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004: 3). Thus, policy makers should aim to facilitate and support inter-group bridging (BR+) as well as the positive type of in-group bonding (BO+), but be aware of and seek to prevent formation of harmful in-group bonding (BO–). There are numerous examples of good and bad mixtures of bonding and bridging in the literature, though they are rarely made explicit as such. A failure to get the right mix is apparent in instances where migrants are not properly integrated into Western societies, and ‘parallel societies’ emerge (Nannestad et al. 2006). Here, the BO– category is clearly dominant. A better mix has been uncovered in Denmark (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004), where the organisation of physical meeting places that transcend group cleavages - village halls, sports halls, associational buildings and club houses, churches, public squares and market places, annual festivals, centrally placed playgrounds and parks equipped with benches and tables, etc - has been fundamental for formation of beneficial bridging social capital.

Such a mix may be present but not always visible by present research methods. Thus, a harmonious mix should include not only bonding and bridging, but a better balance between qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation. This brings us back to our ‘social capital grid’. We include a table below (3) summarising the results of this review along the lines of our proposed grid. Whilst acknowledging that this review is by no means completely comprehensive, it does seem to support the dichotomy suggested above, with the large majority of research that we have covered clustering into the bridging/quantitative and bonding/qualitative cells.
Table 3: The Social Capital Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
<th>Bonding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak ties, historical analysis of national civic traditions (Italy, US), neighbourhood studies and community development (Canada, India, Denmark)</td>
<td>Bonding mechanisms, closed groups, historical reciprocity, amoral familism, support/care and mafia crime (Russia, Poland, Romania), immigrants and social exclusion (US, Malta, Australia), educational performance and group closure, harmful bonding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Quantitative | Links between volunteering, membership and trust and outcomes (economic growth, crime, health, satisfaction, happiness), but also inequality and racial diversity, studies into race segregation, local surveys and factor analysis, trends in membership, volunteering, trust and democratic participation (US, UK, Germany, Australia, Canada, internationally), links to employment, links to welfare, | Informal time activities, bonding (Australia), class and distinction, welfare reduction |

The pattern revealed with the grid approach – that much of the research does seem to fall into the dichotomous pattern suggested earlier in this paper – indicates that there are likely substantial areas of research yet to be covered to give a more fully rounded picture of social capital. We are not attempting to dictate a research agenda – we have not comprehensively proved that the quantitative-bridging/ qualitative-bonding dichotomy holds up, or that it is necessarily inappropriate if it does. Different situations may require qualitative and inductively oriented methods taken from sociology, anthropology and history in given circumstances, and these may be likely to cluster methods and concepts together.

The important thing is to recognise that methods and concepts, whilst distinct, are not unrelated in research, and to keep this in mind in examining the state and possibilities for undertaking research and engaging in collaborations between disciplines and methodological traditions. Given the by now voluminous breadth of the field, breaking down the study of social capital into subsections as suggested by this ‘social capital grid’ will help make this explicit and close the gap between theory and measurement, hopefully advancing the study of social networks and interaction to the next level.

References:


Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.


