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Understanding social capital: Are the problems inherent in Putnam's concept intractable?

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines Putnam's concept of 'social capital'. While Putnam's work on social capital and civic engagement has received attention in both academic and wider circles, doubts have been expressed about various aspects of the concept. Putnam's version of social capital, and the main problems with it, are outlined in Chapter One of this thesis. In Chapters Two and Three alternative conceptual approaches are examined to see whether they might resolve any of the difficulties in Putnam work.

The six problems arising from Putnam's work identified in Chapter One are: 1) the lack of a developed conceptual framework; 2) whether macro-level analysis is appropriate; 3) how the concept fits with considerations of structure and agency; 4) whether the negative aspects of social capital are fully taken into account; 5) what the relative merits of "bonding" and "bridging" social capital are and; 6) whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created.

In Chapter Two, Coleman and Ostrom's separate work on social capital is analysed. They use the concept as part of an attempt to add broader social considerations to theories of rational and collective action. In Chapter Three, the main authors examined are Bourdieu and Lin. Bourdieu uses social capital to complement his concept of cultural capital in looking at the reproduction of inequality. Lin develops a theory of social capital that focuses on individuals' action in pursuing resources in networks.

It emerges that the other authors can contribute various elements that help to address some of the problems in Putnam's work. Yet the most appropriate level of analysis and the full implications of bridging social capital remain points of contention. In Chapter Four the future of Putnam's use of social capital is debated and it is concluded that he will have to abandon his macro-level analysis if the full conceptual intricacies of social capital are to be realised.

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'You can never make that crossing that she made, for such Great Voyages in this world do not any more exist.'

Tony Kushner – *Angels in America*[1]

[1] Kushner, T. 1992. *Angels in America – Part One: Millennium Approaches.* London: Nick Hern Books. p. 2.

I.) Introduction

The concept of "social capital" has generated significant interest during the last decade. It is purported to be something that might explain why some societies are more civic than others. Social capital is a concept that has caught the attention of the American[2] and UK[3] governments, in addition to the World Bank.[4] Putnam's work on social capital and civic engagement is by far the most prominent, although it has been criticised by some in academic circles. His work bridges disciplines such as history, politics, sociology, and economics; and combines detailed quantitative analysis with certain qualitative methods. It initially appeared that in social capital Putnam had found a convincing explanation why some communities have higher levels of civic engagement than others.

"Social capital" is a term that has been used in various contexts for over a century. It was first coined by Marx, and was later used by education authors Dewey and Hanifan. The concept was also used independently by various authors throughout the twentieth century. Its modern usage stems from Loury and Bourdieu, both writing in the 1970s. Coleman, a sociologist, used the concept, following Loury, in the 1980s and his work was in turn picked up by Putnam, who popularised the concept. Providing a generic definition of the concept is difficult as conceptions can differ markedly between each version, as this thesis will demonstrate. Suffice to say at this juncture that social capital tends to refer to the importance of networks and the benefits arising from social interaction.

It is with Putnam's work on social capital that the story behind the modern phenomenon of the concept lies, and it is the main focus of this thesis. In his work he originally uses the concept to examine differing levels of civic engagement in Italy. Latterly, he uses it to analyse the decline of civic engagement in America.

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[2] For example, parts of President Clinton's 1995 State of the Union address was inspired by the work of Putnam. See Portes, A. 1998. 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology' *Annual Review of Sociology*, pp. 1-24, p. 19.

[3] For example: Home Office Research Study. 2004. *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities.* Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

[4] For example: World Bank. 2000. *World Development Report 2000/01: Attacking Poverty.* New York: Oxford University Press. Also see the World Bank website: http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/scapital/index.htm.

What Putnam appears to discover in his work on Italy, published in his book *Making Democracy Work*, is the reason why the north is so much more civically engaged than the south. He argues that horizontal networks, as well as norms of reciprocity and trust, are much more prevalent in the north. He terms these networks, norms and trust "social capital". This social capital is what lays the key foundation for civic activity. Putnam also finds that the differences are deeply entrenched historically, and traces back the level of engagement over several centuries.

Putnam later applied the concept of social capital to America in *Bowling Alone*. Using quantitative datasets stretching back a century, he demonstrates how social capital and civic engagement rose in the early twentieth century, peaked in the middle of the century, and has been in steep decline over the last three decades. Putnam concludes that the decline is mainly due to the passing of a "long civic generation", which came of age during the depression and the second world war. This generation was not only very civically engaged, but also socialised more and had higher levels of trust. Putnam uses a startling array of datasets in the book that track membership of associations, levels of trust, the degree of active participation in community events, and informal socialising. He argues that the decline can be reversed, and cites the early part of the twentieth century as a precedent.

Putnam's version of social capital has great academic appeal. It is difficult to estimate just how much his work has stimulated debate in the fourteen years since the publication of *Making Democracy Work*. The book was declared by the editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* as the most cited work in the social sciences of the 1990s.[5] Even Fine, a critic of Putnam, notes how the concept 'tapped the intellectual nerve of social theory at the turn of the millennium.'[6]

Yet Putnam's work has also attracted strong criticism. Many question his conceptual generalisations and failure to fully take into account the possible negative outcomes of social capital. Although Putnam addresses some of these issues in his later work, there are still aspects of his concept that remain problematic, as will be

[5] According to the editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. See Fine, B. 2001. *Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political economy and social science at the turn of the millennium.* London: Routledge. p. 83.
[6] Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory*, p. 191.

demonstrated. The objective of this thesis is to evaluate whether the problems inherent in Putnam's concept of social capital – which promises so much – can be overcome by drawing on alternative versions of the concept; or whether ultimately the concept is inappropriate for his work on civic engagement.

The history of the concept of social capital, which dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century, is outlined below. This includes an overview of the contemporary interpretations of social capital (the second wave) that are explored in-depth in this thesis. At the end of the chapter, the issues arising from Putnam's work, which will structure how the alternative approaches featured in Chapters Two and Three will be examined, are presented.

I.I.) History of the concept of social capital

This section will look at the history of the concept of social capital, starting with its conceptual antecedents.

I.I.I.) Conceptual antecedents of social capital

Because the many versions of social capital are from different disciplines, there are naturally many streams of conceptual antecedents. Putnam's work often draws on the notion that associational activity brings wider benefits, which dates back to Tocqueville in the 1860s.[7] Banfield's work on amoral familism in southern Italy in the 1950s is also highly influential on Putnam's work on civic engagement in Italy.[8] In addition, Almond and Verba's examination of civic culture prefigures Putnam's work both conceptually and methodologically in many ways, and they coincidently use the term 'social overhead capital' in their conclusion to *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*.[9] There are other conceptual

[7] Tocqueville, A. 1862. *Democracy in America* Vols. I &II, London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts.
[8] Banfield, E. C. 1958. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society.* Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.
[9] Almond, G. A., and Verba, S. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations.* Boston, Little Brown and Company. p. 373. See Farr, J. 2004. 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', *Political Theory* 32 (1), pp. 6-33. p. 30 n18.

antecedents of social capital that are utilised in the different versions of the concept from classic works of sociology and political science. Portes and Sensenbrenner summarise these:[10]

Table I.I.) Social capital: Types and characteristics[11]

Sources	**Operating Principle**	**Classical Referents**
Value introjection	Socialization into consensually established beliefs	Durkheim's ([1893] 1984) analysis of the social underpinnings of legal contracts[12]
Reciprocity exchanges	Norm of reciprocity in face to face interaction	Simmel's ([1908] 1955) analysis of exchanges in dyads and triads[13]
Bounded solidarity	Situational reactive sentiments	Marx and Engels's ([1848] 1948; [1846]) 1947) analysis of the emergence of working class consciousness[14]
Enforceable trust	Particularistic rewards and sanctions linked to group membership	Weber's ([1922] 1947) analysis of substantive rationality in economic transactions[15]

The influence of the various antecedents will become apparent in the main body of the thesis. For example, the positive and negative aspects of group memberships is a recurring theme throughout, and the power of norms of reciprocity feature prominently in Chapters One and Two.

[10] The table is an abridged version of the one in Portes, A., and Sensenbrenner, J. 1993. 'Embeddedness and immigration: notes on the social determinants of economic action', *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (6) pp. 1320-1350. p. 1326.
[11] Social capital is defined as "collective expectations affecting individual economic behaviour."
[12] Durkheim, E. 1984 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society.* New York: Free Press.
[13] Simmel, G. 1955 [1908]. *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations.* New York: Free Press.
[14] Marx, K., and Engels, F. 1947 [1846]. *The German Ideology.* New York: International; and Marx, K., and Engels, F. 1948 [1848]. *The Communist Manifesto.* New York: International.
[15] Weber, M. 1947 [1922]. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.* New York: Free Press.

I.I.II.) Early usages of the term "social capital"

In *Bowling Alone* Putnam notes how the term had a long history in the twentieth century: '[t]he term *social capital* itself turns out to have been independently invented at least six times over the twentieth century, each time to call attention to the ways in which our lives are made more productive by social ties.'[16] Importantly, Putnam observes that the term kept on being independently invented (or rather unintentionally reinvented), as opposed to being overtly revived from the work of a previous author. The table below outlines the various usages of the term social capital chronologically, dating back to the nineteenth century. It combines the works identified by Farr, Putnam and Woolcock:[17]

[16] Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon & Schuster. p. 19.

[17] This table's early sections are based on works cited by the following: Woolcock, M. 1998. 'Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework', *Theory and Society* 27 pp. 151-208, p. 155; Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 19-20 and; Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', pp. 11-25. Each author's main work will be fully referenced in the appropriate parts of this chapter.

Table I.II.) Uses of the concept of social capital

General Era	Author	Main subject area	First usage
Initial uses of the concept	Karl Marx	Quantitative grouping of individuals' capital	1867
	Henry Sidgwick	Aggregate of common possessions e.g. roads	1883
	John Bates Clark	Productive action of capital	1885
	Alfred Marshall	Aggregate of common possessions e.g. roads	1890
First wave using the concept	Edward Bellamy	The "social fund"	1897
	John Dewey	Civic implications of education	1900
	Lyda Hanifan	Civic implications of education	1916
Independent uses of concept	John Seeley Alexander Sim Elizabeth Loosley	Study of club memberships in suburban life	1956
	George Homans	Social behaviour	1961
	Jane Jacobs	Study of neighbourliness in urban life	1961
	Pierre Bourdieu Jean-Claude Passeron	The reproduction of inequality	1970
	Glen Loury	Income differences by race	1977
	Ekkehart Schlicht	How transaction costs in economic exchanges are reduced	1984
Second wave using the concept	Hendrik Flap Nan De Graaf	Benefits for occupational attainment	1986
	James Coleman	Combining economic and social considerations for facilitating action	1987
	Elinor Ostrom	Combining economic and social considerations facilitating collective action	1990
	Ronald Burt	The most advantageous network ties in employment networks	1992
	Alejandro Portes Julia Sensenbrenner	Combining economic and social considerations of collective action	1993
	Robert Putnam	Civic engagement	1993
	Nan Lin	How individuals utilise social resources	1995
	Michael Foley Bob Edwards	The importance of both network connections and resources	1997

It was only after Putnam raised the profile of the concept – especially after applying it to America in the mid-1990s – that its past proponents were fully recognised. This thesis focuses on authors in the "second wave", in addition to Bourdieu, who first used the concept in 1970 (with Passeron). Bourdieu is the earliest user of the concept to be examined in detail in this thesis.

The various eras associated with the use of the concept are further explored below.

I.I.III.) The first known uses of the concept

In Farr's conceptual history of social capital Marx is identified as the first known user of the term in *Das Capital* in 1867. Marx defines social capital (gesellschaftliche Kapital) as an aggregate of individual capital that forms a fund for future production.[18] Other early users of the term include Sidgwick (in 1883), Clark (in 1885), and Marshall (in 1890).[19] Farr asserts that there is some commonality in their usages of the term:

> They were each in their own way challenging classical political economy, either by radicalizing its labor theory of value (Marx), accommodating it to utilitarianism and marginal utility theory (Sidgwick and Marshall, differently), or moving to replace it altogether with a marginalist theory of production and distribution (Clark). They were also attacking what they regarded as the unsocial point of view of classical political economy...[20]

[18] Farr quotes the original German from Marx, K. 1972 [1867]. *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Okonomie.* Berlin: Dietz Verlag. p. 636. See Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 23.
[19] Sidgwick, H. 1883. *The Principles of Political Economy.* London: MacMillian; Clark, J. B. 1885. *The Philosophy of Wealth.* Boston: Ginn; and Marshall, A. 1961 [1890]. *Principles of Economics.* 9th ed London: MacMillian.
[20] Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 22.

More obscurely, Farr finds that the term was used in a couple of literary contexts during the 1870s.[21] In addition, Glaeser notes that Henry James uses the term in *The Golden Bowl* in 1909 in the following passage about the character Charlotte:

> Her singleness, her solitude, her want of means, that is her want of ramifications and other advantages, contributed to enrich her somehow with an odd precious neutrality, to constitute for her, so detached yet so aware, a sort of small social capital.[22]

These instances suggest that the juxtaposition of the two words is perhaps not a great leap of the imagination, especially if the term "capital" was frequently being used in intellectual circles at the time. However, none of the above usages *directly* influenced the contemporary social capital authors and only Farr notes most of their existence and use.

I.I.IV.) The first wave of social capital authors

Farr identifies Bellamy as using the concept and influencing Dewey. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and its sequel *Equality* uses fiction to outline a socialist utopian future. Unlike Henry James, who uses social capital in fiction as humorous analogy, Bellamy uses it to articulate political ideas. The character Julian West (from 1897) awakes in the year 2000 and enjoys his experience of a world with a social fund of wealth created by the labouring classes for the collective good. West exclaims: '[i]t is because you are accustomed to regarding the social capital rather than your day-to-day exertions as the main source of your wealth. It is, in a word, the difference between the attitude of the capitalist and the proletarian.'[23] This is "social capital" very much as a collective good and in common ownership. Farr believes that this

[21] Farr finds term used by Cook, C. 1877. 'Togas and Toggery', *Scribner's Monthly* 14, p. 799 and; Howells, W. D. 1877. 'Out of the question. A Comedy', *Atlantic Monthly* 39, p.200. See Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 30 n18.
[22] James, H. 1909. *The Golden Bowl.* New York edition Book One, Chapter Three p. 54. This usage was first noted by Glaser, although he did not provide a reference. See Glaeser, E. 2001. 'The Formation of Social Capital', ISUMA 2 (1), pp. 34-40. p. 35.
[23] Bellamy, E. 1897. *Equality.* New York: D. Appleton. pp. 90-91.

conception of social capital is different from most of the versions that followed, but is still relevant: 'the social fund concept of social capital deserves attention here in our conceptual history for terminological, temporal, and thematic reasons.'[24] Bellamy's concerns were shared by Dewey and Hanifan. Bellamy was also a popular author, a fact not lost on Dewey, who wrote about Bellamy's concept of social capital.[25]

One of the most detailed early versions of social capital is by Dewey and it reflects many of the concerns of later social capital authors, especially Putnam. Dewey championed community interaction generally: 'society means association; coming together in joint intercourse and action for the better realization of any form of experience which is augmented and confirmed by being shared'.[26] Looking at how schooling can be of more use to society, Dewey deploys the concept of social capital when describing how the key subjects on the curriculum (the "three Rs") could be made more relevant to real life:

> These subjects are social in a double sense. They represent the tools which society has evolved in the past as the instruments of its intellectual pursuits. They represent the keys which will unlock to the child the wealth of social capital which lies beyond the possible range of his limited individual experience.[27]

This sees social capital as enabling children to enjoy a collective accumulation of experience and collective goods. Dewey has never been acknowledged in later social capital literature, which is unfortunate as he probably influenced Hanifan, the author previously hailed as the pioneer of the concept by Putnam.[28]

While Hanifan cites several of Dewey's writings and worked with one of his collaborators, Farr finds no conclusive evidence that Hanifan adopted the concept of

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[24] Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 21.
[25] See Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 20.
[26] Dewey, J. 1976-83[1920]. *Middle Works, 1899-1924.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, vol 12, p. 196. Quoted in Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 14.
[27] Dewey, J. 1915. 'The Psychology of Elementary Education', *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum.* New York: Dover, pp. 58-71. p.69.
[28] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 19.

social capital directly from him.[29] Hanifan's concept of social capital is remarkably prescient of later versions:

> In the use of the phrase *social capital* I make no reference to the usual acceptation of the term *capital*, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community, whose logical center is the school.[30]

Putnam is surprised that Hanifan's work on social capital was not picked up before: 'Hanifan's account of social capital anticipated virtually all the crucial elements in later interpretations, but his conceptual invention apparently attracted no notice from other social commentators and disappeared without a trace.'[31] Smith and Kulynych suggest the political climate of the 1920s contributed to the disappearance of Hanifan's version of the concept:

> There are undoubtedly many reasons why Hanifan's terminology failed to catch fire, but some of them almost certainly reflected the fact that during the decade in which he was writing, capitalism and capital lacked as widespread a cachet as they would enjoy eighty years later.[32]

What is particularly interesting about Hanifan's work not being picked up before is that two contemporary proponents of the concept, Coleman and Bourdieu, also developed the concept initially in relation to the sociology of education.

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[29] Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 19.
[30] Hanifan, L. J. 1916. 'The Rural School Community Centre', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 67 pp. 130-38. p. 130. Emphasis in the original.
[31] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 19.
[32] Smith, S. S., and Kulynych, J. 2002. 'It May Be Social, but Why Is It Capital? The Social Construction of Social Capital and the Politics of Language', *Politics & Society* 30 (1), pp. 149-186. p. 165.

I.I.V.) Isolated uses of the concept in the twentieth century

After the first wave of social capital authors there were six other known versions of the concept in the twentieth century. The most important is Bourdieu and Passeron's,[33] who first used the term in 1970. However, they did not articulate the concept in any depth and it was not developed further until Bourdieu's "sketch" almost a decade later in 1979, and his only full articulation of it came in 1983.[34] Bourdieu's more developed work on the subject will be looked at in the next section. The other authors in the twentieth century who use the concept include: the Canadian sociologists Seeley, Sim, and Loosley in their work on group memberships in suburbia in 1956;[35] Homans who looked at social behaviour in 1961;[36] Jacobs who investigated urban neighbourliness in 1961;[37] and the economist Schlicht, who looked at how transaction costs in economic exchanges are lessened by informal rules in 1984.[38] After Bourdieu, the most significant of the independent users of the concept in the twentieth century is Loury. Loury contemplates (in 1977) the disadvantages faced by ethnic minorities and asserts that while the concept of human capital examines investment in individuals, it does not explain why human capital yields greater value in affluent communities than in impoverished ghettos. He believes that social background is a key factor in this:

[33] Bourdieu, P., and Passeron, J. C. 1977 [1970]. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* 2nd edition London: Sage.
[34] See: Bourdieu, P. 1979. 'Les trios etats du capital culturel', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 30, pp. 3-6; and Bourdieu, P. 1980. 'Le Capital Social: Notes Provisoires', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 31, pp. 2-3; and Bourdieu, P. 1986 [1983]. 'The Forms of Capital', in Richardson, J. G. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.
[35] Seeley, J. R., Sim, A. R., Loosley, E. W. 1956. *Crestwood: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life.* New York: Basic Books.
[36] Homans, G. C. 1961. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
[37] Jacobs, J. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* New York: Random House.
[38] Schlicht, E. 1984. 'Cognitive Dissonance in Economics', in Normengeleitetes Verhalten in den Sozialwissenschaften. Berlin: Duncker and Humblot.

> An individual's social origin has an obvious and important effect on the amount of resources that is ultimately invested in his or her development. It may thus be useful to employ a concept of "social capital" to represent the consequences of social position in facilitating acquisition of the standard human capital characteristics.[39]

Loury warns that there are problems with the measurement of social capital, although he still ultimately believes that it has conceptual value: '[w]hile measurement problems abound, this idea does have the advantage of forcing the analyst to consider the extent to which individual earnings are accounted for by social forces outside an individual's control.'[40] Later, Coleman cites the work of Loury when defining social capital, and this is an early instance of an interrelated usage of social capital in the modern era.[41]

I.I.VI.) The second wave of social capital authors

In *Making Democracy Work* Putnam cites Coleman's definition of social capital,[42] although his own version of the concept differs somewhat. Putnam's work on social capital remains the dominant paradigm and it has shaped academic and popular perceptions of the concept. Yet, as will be demonstrated, his concept has also provoked a wide range of critiques. Some of this criticism suggests that by examining social capital in relation to civic engagement at the macro-level, Putnam overstretches the concept. Putnam's work, along with that of some of the authors that he has influenced, is examined in Chapter One of this thesis.

Much of the modern usage of the term stems from Coleman's deployment of it, which in turn influenced Putnam. Coleman first used the term in 1987,[43] but his

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[39] Loury, G. 1977. "A Dynamic Theory of Racial Income Differences", in ed. Wallace, P. A. & LeMund, A. *Women, Minorities, and Employment Discrimination.* pp. 158-88 Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. p. 176.
[40] Loury, 'A Dynamic Theory of Racial Income Differences', p. 176
[41] Coleman, J. S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 300.
[42] Putnam, R. D. with Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. Y. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton University Press. p.167.
[43] Coleman, J. S. 1987, 'Norms as Social Capital', in Radnitzky, G., and Bernholz, P. (eds) *Economic Imperialism: The Economic Method Applied Outside the Field of Economics.* New York: Paragon House, pp. 133-55.

first real articulation of the concept came a year later.[44] In *Foundations of Social Theory* (1990), he not only credits Loury for the concept of social capital, but also acknowledges Lin's theory of social resources. Coleman's work looks at how social capital can aid both individual and collective action. Ostrom also uses social capital to consider collective action, and their work on social capital is considered together in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Bourdieu's version of social capital was often overlooked by Anglo-American authors after its first use in the 1970 original French edition of *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (written with Passeron). Social capital features in diagrams alongside cultural capital, but does not have a strong individual identity as a concept.[45] It was the 1983 article (1986 in the English language) 'The Forms of Capital' that saw his most lengthy articulation of the concept.[46] His work was later picked up by authors looking at social resources, such as Flap and De Graaf.[47] They essentially use Lin's theory of social resources under the term social capital (after Bourdieu) in 1986, although DiMaggio and Mohr were the first to make the connection between Bourdieu's concept of social capital and Lin's theory of social resources a year before.[48] Flap and De Graaf do not explore the concept in any great detail and it would take Lin almost a decade to use the term social capital in his own work (in 1995).[49] Considering the influence of Lin's theory of social resources on Coleman, Lin developing it into a theory of social capital was in many ways the field coming full circle. Burt, another author using the theory of social resources, first used the term social capital a few years before Lin, in 1992.[50] Bourdieu and the network authors are examined in Chapter Three of this thesis.

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[44] Coleman, J. S. 1988. 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* vol 94, pp. S95-S120.
[45] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education*, pp. 255-58.
[46] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital'.
[47] Flap, H. D, and De Graaf N. D. 1986. 'Social Capital and Attained Occupational Status', *Netherlands' Journal of Sociology* 22, pp. 145-161.
[48] DiMaggio, P., and Mohr. 1985. 'Cultural Capital, Educational Attainment, and Marital Selection', *The American Journal of Sociology.* 90 (6), pp. 1231-1261. p. 1256.
[49] Lin, N. 1995. 'Les Resources Sociales: Une Theorie Du Capital Social', *Revue Francaise de Sociologie* XXXVI (4), pp. 685-704.
[50] Burt, R. S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

One of the most interesting aspects of all work on social capital is how it relates to debates in the social sciences at the time. For example, Farr asserts that there is a clear difference between early and contemporary social capital authors:

> The political economists of the nineteenth century – from Marx to Marshall to Bellamy – took capital from the social point of view. Today's social capitalists, apparently, take "the social" from capital's point of view. The one reflected an age coming to terms with capital, the other an age coming to capital for its terms. Then, "social capital" expressed an explicit antithesis to an unsocial perspective upon capital, now, an implicit antithesis to a non-capitalist perspective on society. "Social capital" was once a category of political economy in a period of its transformation, now one of economized politics, expressing the general dominance of economic modes of analysis in society and social sciences.[51]

The point that some modern social capital authors adopt economic language and perceptions is something that recurs throughout this thesis. The most vocal critic of this phenomenon is Fine, who believes that social capital is the result of a full-scale invasion of social theory by economics.[52]

I.I.VII.) Justifying the grouping and selection of authors in this thesis

Most of the second wave of social capital authors, cited above, are studied in-depth in this thesis. In addition to Putnam, examining Coleman and Bourdieu is pretty standard in most overviews of social capital.[53] The addition of Ostrom is logical due to the developed state of her work and because she shares some common ground with Coleman. Lin is included on the grounds that he has produced a comprehensive, if narrowly focused, theory of social capital which is often overlooked, perhaps because it is one of the most recent additions to the field.

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[51] Farr, 'Social Capital: A Conceptual History', p. 25.
[52] Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory*, pp. 3-21.
[53] For example: Field, J. 2003. *Social Capital.* London: Routledge; Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory*; and Schuller, T., Baron, S., and Field, J. 2000. 'Social Capital: A Review and Critique', in Baron, S., Field, J., and Schuller, T. *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-38.

This thesis divides work on social capital into three groupings of contemporary authors, which have been termed: the Civic Engagement authors, examined in Chapter One (Putnam and the Putnam School); the Collective Action authors, examined in Chapter Two (Coleman and Ostrom); and the Network authors, examined in Chapter Three (mainly Bourdieu and Lin). These groupings are clearly discernible, although it is only some of the network authors who actually identify themselves as part of a wider grouping. However, there is also some crossover between approaches, as will be seen.

It is worth noting several omissions and justifying these absences. Perhaps the most famous authors to have used the concept social capital that are not examined in this thesis are Becker and Fukuyama. Becker's work on social capital is not as well known as his material on human capital. He acknowledges the influence of Coleman's version and does not develop the concept of social capital himself or add anything of note to it.[54] Fukuyama does even less to develop the concept, but his work on social capital is certainly well known as it is featured in his widely discussed work on trust. Fukuyama outlines what he sees as the relationship between the two:

> Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all the other groups in between.[55]

Debates about social capital and trust are featured in Chapter One of this thesis, especially in relation to the "Putnam School" of authors. This only includes authors that discuss trust in the context of Putnam's conception of social capital, and does not include Fukuyama. Flap and De Graaf are also not studied in-depth, despite being the first network authors to use the term social capital. This is because they do not develop the concept sufficiently or add anything unique to it that would warrant

[54] Becker, G. S. 1996. *Accounting for Tastes.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. pp. 12-16.
[55] Fukuyama, F. 1995. *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity.* London: Hamish Hamilton. p. 26.

sustained analysis. However, there are other authors using the network approach who are considered more briefly in Chapter Three: Granovetter, Burt, Portes, and Foley and Edwards. This is because of their contribution to the development of the concept of social capital, and their influence on other authors, especially Lin.

I.II.) The structure of the thesis

The objective of this thesis is to ascertain whether the problems in Putnam's concept of social capital are intractable. Chapter One looks at Putnam's work, and various critiques of it, in great detail. The chapter is split between his study of Italy in *Making Democracy Work* and his examination of America in *Bowling Alone*. At the end of the chapter the following six issues with his work emerge:

1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework.
2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital.
3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency.
4.) Whether it is sufficiently demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes.
5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are.
6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created.

Some of the issues are partially addressed by Putnam in his later work, such as the negative outcomes of social capital, while others remain more contentious, such as the most appropriate level of analysis and the full implications of bridging social capital.

Putnam does not devote a great deal of time to developing social capital conceptually; rather he focuses on various detailed quantitative studies of its relationship with civic engagement. Other authors have considered social capital conceptually in much greater depth. In Chapters Two and Three these alternative approaches are examined to see whether they can provide resources to resolve the problems in Putnam's work. In Chapter Four it is debated whether Putnam's use of the concept to look at civic engagement remains tenable. At the heart of this debate is the question of whether the intricate conceptual subtleties of social capital can be studied at the macro-level.

1.) Putnam's Civic Engagement approach to social capital

Robert Putnam initially formulated his concept of social capital in *Making Democracy Work* in 1993. The book is a culmination of a twenty-year study of the performance of new regional government institutions in Italy. In it he considers why some regions have higher civic activity than others, and it transpires that the new institutions are generally more productive in the north than in the south. At the heart of his conclusion is the concept of social capital, which is utilised to explain how the levels of current civic engagement were historically determined.

The book seemingly represented an ideal piece of social scientific research; it is unconcerned with discipline boundaries and has a wide-ranging methodology that uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research. It appeared to be potentially important as it apparently gives a tangible reason why societies have different levels of civic engagement, and provides a way to measure this empirically.

Putnam later applied the concept of social capital to America in a series of articles in the mid-1990s. These seemed to indicate that there had been a decline in social capital in America in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Eventually in 2000 he published *Bowling Alone*, a book-length study which examines the decline of civic engagement and social capital in America. While reaching public attention, Putnam's work has also been the subject of stringent academic criticism. The sheer amount of attention – positive and negative – that Putnam's work has received necessitates exploring it and its influence in some detail.

Putnam's macro-level approach purports to explain how generic problems of collection action might be overcome, and he frames social capital in the context of the collective benefits that it might provide. He originally defined social capital in *Making Democracy Work* as: 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions'.[56]

This chapter is split into two main segments because Putnam offers two case-studies of social capital in which the concept differs in various aspects, although he

[56] Putnam, R. D. with Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. Y. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton University Press. p.167.

does not view them as two separate concepts but as part of a continuous research enterprise. This thesis does not purport to demonstrate that the two case-studies feature two radically distinct formulations of social capital by Putnam, rather that the overall hypothesis in each study utilises the concept in significantly different ways. This affects the context in which the concept of social capital is deployed, and some of the central tenets of the original conception simply do not make sense in the way that Putnam uses social capital in his work on America. For example, in the Italian study he asserts that present levels of civic engagement are dictated by historical patterns, whereas in America it can "fluctuate" in response to the behaviour of individuals.

In this chapter Putnam's view of social capital will be outlined, the conceptual assumptions questioned, and its application examined for his Italian study then his American study. Criticisms of Putnam's work by other authors will be looked at, as well as work influenced by him, under the term "The Putnam School". The chapter will highlight unresolved problems in Putnam's work. These themes will be used to examine alternative conceptions of social capital in the following chapters.

1.1.) Regional levels of civic engagement in Italy

Putnam looks at the historical origins of the current levels of civic engagement in Italy and uses the concept of social capital in an attempt to explain the marked difference between north and south. He utilises social capital as part of a wider notion of what makes democracies function optimally, most importantly what produces civic engagement. The book crosses discipline boundaries including politics, sociology, history and economics. It uses parts of existing theories, such as rational choice theory, historical institutionalism, and path dependence. The notion of social capital is not deployed until the last chapter. The background study that led to the development of his social capital hypothesis is examined below.

1.1.1.) A study of new institutions

The regional government reforms in Italy in 1970 provided a chance for political scientists to measure identical institutions in different settings, enabling Putnam to test some of the notions espoused by new institutionalists. Measuring the performance of these institutions over a twenty-year period he found stark differences in their performance, with those in the north apparently being more effective. He uses various indicators to measure institutional performance,[57] which are intended to be indicative of good performance in many different aspects of governance. The average of the sixty-six bivariate correlations among these measures was r .43. Only one correlation was not in the right direction, and two thirds were significant at the .05 level.[58]

The reforms appeared to have been beneficial overall and part of a general change in Italian political culture in both the north and the south.[59] Yet Putnam

[57] His index of institutional performance uses the following measures: Reform legislation 1978-1984; Day care centres 1983; Housing and urban development 1979-1987; Statistical and information services 1981; Legislative innovation 1978-1984; Cabinet stability 1975-1985; Family clinics 1978; Bureaucratic responsiveness 1983; Industrial policy instruments 1984; Budget promptness 1979-1985; Local health unit spending 1983 and; Agricultural spending capacity 1978-1980. See Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 75.
[58] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 217 n24.
[59] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 184.

asserts that there were negative outcomes as well. Firstly, administrative efficiency did not materialise, in fact quite the opposite, with many of the regions possibly guilty of maladministration. Secondly, they exacerbated rather than improved the north-south divide.[60] Significantly for his overall hypothesis, some of the regions were 'better governed than others, even when the governments involved have identical structures and equivalent legal and financial resources'.[61] The pattern was that there tended to be better governance in the north.

1.1.2.) The 'civic community'

The lack of cooperation in southern Italy had been the subject of investigation in political science before. Montegrano – a pseudo name of a small village in Potenza, southern Italy – was the focus of a well-known study by Edward Banfield. He asserted that there was little cooperation in the village beyond the immediate family due to what he termed the ethos of 'amoral familism', a tendency for a society as a whole to have no collective ethos.[62] Places such as this – referred to as 'backward societies' – are not too common, and there have to be extreme symptoms for a society to be termed amorally familistic by Banfield:

> ...the matter is one of degree: no matter how selfish or unscrupulous most of its members may be, a society is not amorally individualistic (or familistic) if there is somewhere in it a significant element of public spiritedness or even of "enlightened" self interest.[63]

Putnam acknowledges Banfield's work on Italy in particular, and his contribution to understanding collective action dilemmas in general.[64] Putnam sought to provide his own insight into why some societies end up with high civic engagement while others

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[60] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 60-1.
[61] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 82.
[62] Banfield, E. C. 1958. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society.* Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press. p. 10.
[63] Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, pp. 11-12.
[64] See, for example, Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p.177

do not – i.e. those that suffer from amoral familism – in relation to modern Italian regional differences.

Putnam not only offers a concept of social capital in *Making Democracy Work*, but also one of civic community. It is necessary to understand this latter concept in order to comprehend his notion of social capital. Social capital is eventually mooted by Putnam as the explanatory factor for a successful civic community. He never articulates the ideal of a civic community that underpins his work in any depth apart from one relatively short passage which outlines the four composite parts of the notion of a civic community as: civic engagement; political equality; solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and associations. In the footnotes he acknowledges the influence of Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* in this methodological approach, and this can clearly be seen in his empirical measures.[65] Indicators he would later use to measure social capital, such as trust, are included. Putnam had therefore moved from an initial focus on the performance of institutions to an examination of the environments in which institutions flourish. He believes that the civic community needs its citizens to actively cooperate in public affairs, even if they are also pursuing their own self-interest.

1.1.2.1.) Tracing the roots of the civic community

Putnam attempts to trace civic engagement in Italy back over nine hundred years. This qualitative account of Italian historical development seeks to provide an explanation for the contemporary quantitative evidence about the present levels of civic activity. He outlines how at the start of the twelfth century very different regimes were prevalent in northern and southern Italy. In the south the new regime founded by Norman mercenaries 'was singularly advanced, both administratively and economically', but socially and politically the south was, and would remain, strictly autocratic.[66] These hierarchical relations were entrenched, and would

[65] See Almond, G. A., and Verba, S. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five nations.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
[66] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 122-3.

become stronger over the centuries that followed.[67] The north's development was the complete opposite of what was happening in the south, and communal republicanism came into being. Putnam asserts that northern Italy's solution to the 'violence and anarchy endemic in medieval Europe' relied 'less on vertical hierarchy and more on horizontal collaboration.'[68] Putnam not only sees this as an early example of a civic community, but a more general example of a group overcoming collective action problems. He concludes that historical patterns of relations affect its present civic performance:

> ...the regions characterized by civic involvement in the late twentieth century are almost precisely the same regions where cooperatives and cultural associations and mutual aid societies were most abundant in the nineteenth century, and where neighbourhood associations and religious confraternities and guilds had contributed to the flourishing communal republics of the twelfth century.[69]

This element of Putnam's work is essential to his overall argument. It seeks to demonstrate that the north-south divide is deeply entrenched and that there were similar patterns of civic activity – albeit in a different form – centuries ago. This suggests that levels of civic engagement are not transitory, but, on the contrary, deeply embedded. This link is one of the standout features of the study, and drew much attention.

1.1.2.2.) Summarising the civic community

Putnam's notion of a civic community is key in order to understand *Making Democracy Work* and his conception of social capital. He believes that the success of institutions and governmental structures in general are dependent upon a strong civic base: '[c]ivic context matters for the way institutions work. By far the most important factor in explaining good government is the degree to which social and

[67] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 124.
[68] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 124.
[69] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 162.

political life in a region approximates the ideal of the civic community.'[70] Therefore he is asserting that the civic environment dictates institutional performance.

Putnam sees various aspects of a civic community interlinking. Numerous attributes and virtues – such as honesty, trust, and law-abidingness – seem to be common in a civic society but rare in an uncivic one. A recurring theme of *Making Democracy Work* is how all of these cycles are self-perpetuating:

> Collective life in the civic regions is eased by the expectation that others will probably follow the rules. Knowing that others will, *you* are more likely to go along, too, thus fulfilling *their* expectations. In the less civic regions nearly everyone expects everyone else to violate the rules.[71]

The concept of the civic community provides Putnam with an explanation of the variation in institutional performance. He produces a hypothesis, tests it empirically and the data has significant correlations suggesting that (a) the composite parts of the civic community are empirically correlated and (b) that institutional performance is linked to civicness. However, he goes on to produce another closely related concept that would form the crux of the book's argument and completely overshadow the notion of civic community – social capital.

1.1.3.) Explaining institutional success: Social capital

In Putnam's concluding chapter he frames the problem of achieving a civic community in the context of general collective action problems. He cites Hume's classic lament of non-cooperation between two farmers 'for want of mutual confidence and security.'[72] Putnam outlines four guises in which games theorists have looked at this problem: the tragedy of the commons; non-contribution to the public-good (free-riding); logic of collective action (e.g. hesitation to go on strike);

[70] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 120.
[71] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 111.
[72] Quoted in Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 162

and the prisoner's dilemma.[73] The tragedy of the commons is an articulation of the type of non-cooperation that dominates southern Italy. Garrett Hardin believes that this tragedy – i.e. hesitancy or failure to cooperate -- is omnipresent in the world:

> In a sense, it was learned thousands of years ago, but natural selection favors the forces of psychological denial. The individual benefits as an individual from his ability to deny the truth even though society as a whole, of which he is a part, suffers. Education can counteract the natural tendency to do the wrong thing, but inexorable succession of generations requires that the basis for this knowledge be constantly refreshed.[74]

Despite the bleak view of Hume and Hardin, cooperation does frequently occur in reality and Putnam notes that there are examples of communities that cooperate, such as 'sharecroppers in central Italy or the practice of barn-raising on the American frontier'.[75] Putnam seeks to explain why these instances of cooperation happen.

1.1.3.1.) The importance of social capital

Putnam asserts that what distinguishes a civic community from an uncivic one is a high stock of social capital (i.e. trust, norms, and networks):

> Success in overcoming dilemmas of collective action and the self-defeating opportunism that they spawn depends on the broader social context within which any particular game is played. Voluntary cooperation is easier in a community that has inherited a substantial stock of social capital, in the form of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement.[76]

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[73] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 163-4.
[74] Hardin, G. 1968. 'The Tragedy of the Commons', in Hardin, G. & Baden, J. *Managing the Commons*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co, pp. 16-30. p. 20.
[75] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 165.
[76] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 167.

There is an important semantic point that should be noted here. Whereas earlier in the book Putnam talked about the attributes of civic communities, here he puts these attributes under the umbrella term of social capital. Basically it serves to clarify aspects of the civic community, yet it should not be confused with it. Social capital is essentially the *features* of a civic community.

Putnam cites Coleman as his source for the concept of social capital, and appears to accept his definition. Coleman's definition of social capital is:

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.[77]

Coleman's conception of social capital is examined in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis. It is important to note that one thing that makes Putnam's version of social capital different from those that came before is that he examines the macro-level effects of social capital. Most authors had previously used social capital in the context of the benefit to the individual, although Coleman had suggested that there could be public goods deriving from it too[78] and Ostrom had looked at its benefits for small communities.[79] Putnam therefore considerably changed the focus and expanded the scope of the concept.

The composite parts of Putnam's definition of social capital, and how they might aid cooperation, will now be examined.

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[77] Coleman, J. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 302. Quoted in a truncated form in Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 167.
[78] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory,* pp. 315-8.
[79] Putnam quotes Coleman's definition in the main text and mentions Loury and Ostrom in a footnote. He also returns to Ostrom's work on collective action and social capital later in the chapter. See Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 166, p. 167, p. 169, and p. 241 n20.

1.1.3.1.1.) Trust

For Putnam, it is essential for there to be a high level of social trust in order to overcome collective action problems. In his work on social capital it is not always clear whether social trust is a *form* of social capital or a *consequence* of it, or just a *proxy measure*.[80] In *Making Democracy Work* it appears to be a form of social capital, which derives from norms and networks: '[t]rust itself is an emergent property of the social system, as much as a personal attribute. Individuals are able to be trusting (and not merely gullible) because of the social norms and networks within which their actions are embedded.'[81] Whatever its status in the definition of social capital, trust is key for collaboration: '[t]rust lubricates cooperation. The greater the levels of trust within a community, the greater the likelihood of cooperation. And cooperation itself breeds trust.'[82] The last sentence is indicative of the supposed self-perpetuating element of the process.

1.1.3.1.2.) Norms

Norms are presented as being important because they are established patterns of behaviour that aid cooperation. The lack of a written contract does not make their bind any less powerful: '[t]he social contract that sustains such collaboration in the civic community is not legal but moral. The sanction for violating it is not penal, but exclusion from the network of solidarity and cooperation.'[83] These norms are vital in a civic community and help to facilitate trust: '[n]orms such as those that undergird social trust evolve because they lower transaction costs and facilitate cooperation.'[84] Most important of all are norms of generalised reciprocity. They are central tenets of

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[80] This debate will be covered in more detail later in the chapter. The role of trust in the social capital debate is discussed in, among others, the following: Foley, M.W. & Edwards, B. 1999. 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', *Journal of Public Policy* vol 19 no 2, pp. 141-173; Newton, K. 2001. 'Social Capital and Democracy', in Foley, M.W., Edwards, B., & Diani, M. *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*. pp. 225-234. Hanover: University Press of New England; Woolcock, M. 2001. 'The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes', *ISUMA* 2 (1) pp. 11-17.

[81] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 177.

[82] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 171.

[83] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 183.

[84] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 172.

Putnam's historical account of the regional differences in civic engagement in Italy: '[t]he norm of generalized reciprocity is a highly productive component of social capital. Communities in which this norm is followed can more efficiently restrain opportunism and resolve problems of collective action.'[85] Effective norms of reciprocity are also likely to be associated with dense networks.[86]

1.1.3.1.3.) Networks and voluntary associations

Just like trust and norms, networks are vital for successful collaboration: '[t]he denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit.'[87] Putnam outlines four reasons why they are so important: they increase the potential costs of defection; they foster robust norms of reciprocity; they facilitate communication and improve the flow of information about the trustworthiness of individuals; and they embody past success at cooperation that can provide a template for the future.[88] Networks can be vertical in structure (as in patron-client) or horizontal (for example voluntary associations, where there is some form of equality between the agents), although in practice it is likely that groups feature elements of both types of relations. The horizontal networks are embodied in organisations such as neighbourhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, and mass-based parties.[89]

For Putnam it is the horizontal 'social' groups that provide the interaction that is the basis for a vibrant civic community, whereas the more vertically structured networks, such as the Catholic church, are not as useful: '[g]ood government in Italy is a by-product of singing groups and soccer clubs, not prayer.'[90] This is due to the nature of these associations: '[i]f horizontal networks of civic engagement help participants solve dilemmas of collective action, then the more horizontally structured an organization, the more it should foster institutional

[85] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 172.
[86] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 172.
[87] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 173.
[88] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 173-4.
[89] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 173.
[90] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 176.

success in the broader community.'[91] Northern Italy had a greater tradition of these networks than the south, which Putnam believes is one of the reasons why the present day north has a more vibrant civic community.

Voluntary associations are often used as empirical indicators of networks in Putnam's work. Such an approach has a long tradition. Tocqueville believed – referring to America – that it is the *act of association* itself – not the aims of the organisation – which is the key:

> Those associations only which are formed in civil life, without reference to political objects, are here adverted to. The political associations which exist in the United States are only a single feature in midst of the immense assemblage of associations in that country.[92]

Putnam's work originally focused on associational activity but this changed later, as will be demonstrated in part two of this chapter.

There is another important distinction that needs to be made about the *type* of networks. Putnam differentiates between strong and weak ties. Mark Granovetter, who is cited by Putnam, asserts that weak ties can be more beneficial as they may provide agents with linkages outside their present circle (see Chapter Three of this thesis for more detail).[93] Putnam notes that:

> Dense but segregated horizontal networks sustain cooperation *within* each group, but networks of civic engagement that cut across social cleavages nourish wider cooperation. This is another reason why networks of civic engagement are such an important part of a community's stock of social capital.[94]

The implications of this are explored in Putnam's later work on social capital, and have become a key issue in the social capital debate, yet in essence Putnam tends to

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[91] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 175.
[92] Tocqueville, A. 1862. *Democracy in America* Vol. II, London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts. p. 128
[93] See Granovetter, M. S. 1973. 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology* 78: pp. 1360-80.
[94] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 175.

focus on stronger ties in his work on Italy i.e. the density of associations rather than the more casual ties of individuals.

It is worth considering what is meant by the term *associations* briefly. Warren differentiates between *primary associations* such as families and friends; and *secondary/intermediate associations*, such as civic, sports and religious groups. There are also *tertiary associations*, e.g. memberships-based interest groups where there is little interaction between members.[95] It is the second type that is predominantly studied in Putnam's work. They are termed intermediate because they can act as a buffer between the state and citizen. Importantly, and unlike tertiary associations, they feature the vital face-to-face interaction that is purported to be so important.

Putnam's assumption is that associations may potentially encourage people from different classes and races to interact, although whether all associations actually cross cleavages is debatable. Other authors have challenged the importance of voluntary associations in the social capital debate, and this will be examined at the end of the chapter.

1.1.3.2.) An example of social capital

In *Making Democracy Work* Putnam uses rotating credit associations as an example of social capital in practice. These are groups of people who each make monthly contributions to a fund which is distributed to one person per month. It provides a resource for the members to draw upon. Even though there is no formal contract for repayment, the norms that bind the transaction (such as the fear of being ostracised) can be very powerful: '[s]o strong can be the norm against defection that members on the verge of default are reported to have sold daughters into prostitution or committed suicide.'[96]

For Putnam, rotating credit associations provide an example of overcoming collective action problems and demonstrate how social capital is key to the process:

[95] Warren, M. E. 2001. *Democracy and Associations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 39.
[96] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 168.

> Like conventional capital for conventional borrowers, social capital serves as a kind of collateral, but it is available to those who have no access to ordinary credit markets. Lacking physical assets to offer as surety, the participants in effect pledge their social connections. Thus social capital is leveraged to expand the credit facilities available in these communities and to improve the efficiency with which markets operate there.[97]

An important factor is that the accumulation of social capital is helped by prior possession: '[a]s with conventional capital, those who have social capital tend to accumulate more – "them as has, gets."'[98] This is why Putnam believes that civic communities have grown stronger over the centuries. Once stocks of social capital are established in a region – either high stocks or low stocks – the pattern remains and Putnam asserts that 'we should expect the creation and destruction of social capital to be marked by virtuous and vicious circles.'[99] He notes that the public good aspect of social capital tends to be undervalued and undersupplied by private agents and therefore it 'must often be produced as a by-product of other social activities', an insight he credits to Coleman.[100]

1.1.3.3.) What high levels of social capital mean for the civic community

As noted above, the concept of social capital is used by Putnam to explain why societies get into a cycle of being either civic or uncivic. He asserts that at least two broad equilibria exist: one is a strategy of cooperation and the other a strategy of non-cooperation. These, once established, are self-reinforcing and it is social capital that is the essential ingredient that aids cooperation:

> Stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Virtuous circles result in social equilibria with high levels of cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being.

[97] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 169.
[98] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 169.
[99] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 170.
[100] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 170.

> These traits define the civic community. Conversely, the absence of these traits in the *un*civic community is also self-reinforcing. Defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another in a suffocating miasma of vicious circles.[101]

The "uncivic" community is very much reminiscent of Banfield's amorally familistic village. Putnam believes that social capital not only produces better governance, but other positive outcomes as well, such as economic benefits: 'social capital, as embodied in horizontal networks of civic engagement, bolsters the performance of the polity and the economy'.[102]

Putnam asserts that the patterns of cooperation and noncooperation are the result of path dependence from past successes or failures: '[p]ath dependence can produce durable differences in performance between two societies, even when the formal institutions, resources, relative prices, and individual preferences in the two are similar.'[103] Despite the regional dichotomy, Putnam believes new institutions can presage a change in political practice, but only to a certain extent and the historical level of cooperation will still predominate.[104]

1.1.4.) Evaluation of Putnam's initial conception of social capital

Social capital only appears in the last chapter of *Making Democracy Work* and its application to Putnam's overall hypothesis is retrospective, and it is very much a *post hoc* concept. Having established the concept of social capital he does not operationalise it, he just assumes that it can account for the phenomena that had been outlined previously in the book.

The criticisms of the concept of social capital in *Making Democracy Work* by commentators include: the broadness and lack of clarity of the definition; the use of

[101] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 177.
[102] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 176. He further explored the supposedly related economic growth in a separate article a few years later. See Helliwell, J. F. and Putnam,, R. D. 2000. 'Economic Growth and Social Capital in Italy', in Dasgupta, P. and Serageldin, I. (eds) *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective.* Washington D. C.: The World Bank, pp. 253-268.
[103] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 179.
[104] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 184.

social associations; the absence of social and political factors; and the lack of consideration of the negative effects of social capital. This section will consider these criticisms in detail.

1.1.4.1.) Lack of definitional clarity

Many have criticised the lack of clarity in Putnam's conception of social capital.[105] One problem is that the scope of definition is perceived to be too broad. For example, Newton believes that it is most expedient to look at one of the following aspects of social capital: trust, social networks, or its outcomes. He notes that Putnam's definition encapsulates all three. Newton believes that the disadvantage of this is 'that it runs together, perhaps even confuses, different things whose relationships are properly the subjects of empirical investigation.'[106] Portes and Landolt are also critical of the conceptual confusion in Putnam's work and believe that various elements should be kept separate:

> For social capital to mean something, the *ability* to command resources through social networks must be separate from the level or the quality of such resources. When social capital and the benefits derived from it are confused, the term merely says that the successful succeed.[107]

The fact that there are so many disparate elements in the definition of social capital is potentially problematic. Causes and consequences are mixed together, and unless they are clearly separated it is difficult to establish causality. There certainly needs to be a clearer consideration of how the process is *facilitating action.*

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[105]See Newton, K. 1999. 'Social capital and democracy in modern Europe', in van Deth, J. W., Maraffi, M., Newton, K., Whiteley, P. F. eds. *Social Capital and European Democracy.* pp. 3-24.; Portes, A. and Landolt, P. 1996. 'The downside of social capital', *The American Prospect* 26/May-June 18-21. Internet version taken from: http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V7/26/26-cnt2.html pp. 1-15; Portes, A. 1998. 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology' *Annual Review of Sociology*, pp. 1-24; Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?'.

[106] Newton, 'Social capital and democracy in modern Europe', p. 3.

[107] Portes and Landolt, 'The downside of social capital', p. 2.

1.1.4.2.) Social associations

Some have questioned Putnam's championing of *social* associations. Levi believes that there is 'a wide gap between various kinds of social clubs and organizations for political action'.[108] Putnam believes that social associations simply create networks of engagement and these teach *cooperation* between members as well as providing them with benefits. The belief that this also fosters civic engagement is more problematic. Although this is Tocqueville's classic assertion, there is certainly a lack of detail of how the mere act of association creates *civic virtue* in practice. Levi cites various problems with linking dense networks to good governance. She is dubious that overcoming free-rider problems in one association will help overcome them in another association or more generally. She also believes that there are limited opportunities for citizens to make effective political demands through social associations. For her not all associations are the same and it is the *type* of activity that is important.[109] This is a contrary opinion to Tocqueville and Putnam who emphasise the *act of association* itself.

1.1.4.3.) The absence of political and social factors

Putnam fails to fully take into account the ways political institutions can affect civil society. Although he addresses the perceived impotence of the Italian state's institutions, he ignores its influence on the regional divide. Many have questioned the lack of consideration of the state in Putnam's 'bottom-up' approach. Levi asserts that Putnam's concept is 'resolutely society-centered to the neglect of other important actors, most notably those in government.'[110] Tarrow agrees and asserts that 'the lack of state agency in the book is one of the major flaws of his explanatory

[108] Levi, 'Social and Unsocial Capital: A Review Essay of Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*', *Politics and Society* 24 (1) pp. 45-55. p. 49.
[109] For a systematic analysis of the different effects of associations see Warren, *Democracy and Associations*.
[110] Levi, 'Social and Unsocial Capital', pp. 49-50.

model.'[111] This is particularly pertinent in Italy because the national government is based in the north and there is a centre-periphery conflict with the south. In the chapter on historical factors Putnam also ignored the power of the north and Tarrow suggests that he 'missed the penetration of southern Italian society by the northern state and the effect this had on the region's level of civic competence'.[112] Tarrow believes that Putnam's is a 'model that conceived of civic capacity as a native soil in which state structures grow rather than one shaped by patterns of state building and state strategy.'[113] There is also a contrast between the industrial north and the agricultural south that Putnam does not fully consider.

Political factors can affect civil society in many other ways. Maloney, Smith and Stoker believe that the state has an important role to play in social capital formation and criticise Putnam for 'neglecting the role played by political structures and institutions in shaping the *context of associational activity* and hence in creating social capital.'[114] They assert that secondary associations do not operate in a vacuum, rather their existence and status is mediated by the state:

> Public authorities are deeply implicated in the shape and activities of voluntary associations, whether it be in terms of the institutions created to encourage engagement and participation, the form of grants and service-level agreements, or the nature of capacity building programmes. The political system does not determine civil society; rather, there is an interpenetration of state and civil society.[115]

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[111] Tarrow, S. 1996. 'Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*', *American Political Science Review* 90: 2, pp. 389-397. p. 395.
[112] Tarrow, 'Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time', p. 395.
[113] Tarrow, 'Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time', p. 395.
[114] Maloney, W., Smith, G., Stoker, G., 2000. 'Social Capital and the City', in Edwards, B., Foley, M. W., and Diani, M. 2001. *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*, Hanover: University Press of New England. pp. 83-96. p. 83. Emphasis in the original.
[115] Maloney, Smith, and Stoker, 'Social capital and the City', pp. 83-4

The lack of this kind of contextualisation of civil society in Putnam's work is problematic.[116]

Another factor that is absent from Putnam's analysis is a serious consideration of social inequality. Boix and Posner believe that it is one of the reasons why there was less cooperation in southern Italy historically:

> Co-operation among unequals is problematic because there will always be incentives for the poor, who will naturally be dissatisfied with the existing distribution of assets, to defect from co-operative arrangements that perpetuate the status quo. Moreover, to maintain their political and economic privileges, the rich will manoeuvre to undermine any collective efforts that the poor may undertake to better their lot.[117]

They therefore assert that social capital reinforces poverty. This is an economically driven view of society that is very much in contrast to Putnam's work. However, the absence of any sustained analysis of economic and social differences in *Making Democracy Work* is surprising considering the poverty in the south in contrast to the more affluent north. The effect of economic inequalities on civic engagement is never fully explored by Putnam, though he has recently expressed a desire to do so (see the end of the chapter).

1.1.4.4.) No consideration of the downside of social capital

In *Making Democracy Work* Putnam focuses only on the positive aspects of social capital, although he notes that it could have negative effects in a journal article in the same year.[118] There has been a lot of material that has since been written on the downside of social capital. Foley and Edwards, for example, have noted that Beirut

[116] In Putnam's outline of the civic community he considers the importance of political equality but does not discuss this in relation to social capital. See Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 88.
[117] Boix, C., and Posner, D. N. 1998. 'Social Capital: Explaining Its Origins and Effects on Government Performance', *British Journal of Political Science* 28, pp. 686-693. p. 688.
[118] Putnam, R. D. 1993. 'The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life', The American Prospect 4 (13). Internet version: http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V4/13/putnam-r.html, pp. 1-8. p. 8.

and Belfast demonstrate how 'associational density' has varying implications in different contexts, and therefore associations cannot be considered *intrinsically* good.[119] Yet it was Portes and Landolt that were the first to articulate the potential negative effects of social capital in-depth. They also asserted that not all associations have positive effects for society, citing the Mafia as an example.[120] Putnam, however, would perhaps classify such organisations as examples of vertical networks opposed to the more beneficial horizontal networks. Portes has more recently summarised what he believes to be the four main types of negative consequences of social capital. Firstly, there is the *exclusion of outsiders*. Networks are, after all, excluding by definition, and while they might benefit those within them, these benefits might be at the expense of others outside the network. Secondly, membership itself can bring its own problems and there can be *excess claims on group members*. Portes uses the example of successful entrepreneurs in immigrant communities who have various demands put on them by other members of that community. The third criticism is that there can be *restrictions on individual freedoms* and that a group can bring demands for conformity from those within it, and this can encroach on privacy and individuals' autonomy. Finally, there can be *downward levelling norms*, and it may be difficult for people to escape certain enclaves.[121] Portes surmises: '[w]hereas bounded solidarity and trust provide the sources for socioeconomic ascent and entrepreneurial development among some groups, among others they have exactly the opposite effect. Sociability cuts both ways.'[122]

The concept is simply not developed sufficiently in *Making Democracy Work* to consider the full negative implications of dense networks. Putnam later employed the distinction of bonding social capital and bridging social capital (which will be studied in detail in the second part of this chapter), and this can be seen as an

[119] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 155.
[120] Portes and Landolt, 'The downside of social capital', pp. 2-4.
[121] Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', pp. 15-18, used the same criticisms as Portes and Landolt, 'The downside of social capital', but put them under four headings opposed to three.
[122] Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', p. 18.

attempt to address many of the issues relating to the negative outcomes of social capital.

1.1.4.5.) Summary

There are many shortcomings in Putnam's original work on social capital. In Putnam's defence, although the study on Italy as a whole is conceptually undeveloped, it was his first exposition of social capital. There was the potential to correct some of the shortcomings outlined above in his later work on America. Whether he took this opportunity will be considered shortly.

1.1.5.) Summarising Putnam's work in Italy on social capital

Putnam's concept of social capital in *Making Democracy Work* provoked interest partly because it champions communities and cooperation – not just for a perceived intrinsic value – but for the wider benefits that they might bring. Margaret Levi asserted in 1996 that: '[f]ew scholarly books in recent years have generated so much discussion, acclaim, and criticism. Putnam has helped transform the agenda of social science'.[123] The work appealed across political divides and disciplinary boundaries. Harriss and de Renzio also noted the political appeal of social capital which 'seemed to promise answers which are attractive both to the neoliberal right – still sceptical about the role of the state – and to those committed to ideas about participation and grassroots empowerment.'[124]

Making Democracy Work encapsulates many theories and uses many different methodological tools. It starts as an examination of current institutional performance and ends by looking at how problems of collective action can be overcome. It produces two concepts: the civic community and social capital. The concept of social capital is not examined at any great length, but is the focus of the conclusion and provides the biggest discussion point about the book. Although it had

[123] Levi, 'Social and Unsocial Capital', p. 45.
[124] Harriss, J. & De Renzio, P. 1997. ''Missing Link' or Analytically Missing? The Concept of Social Capital', *Journal of International Development* 9 (7), pp. 919-937. p. 920.

been used by other authors, the concept was hardly well known or widely discussed at the time outside of literature on education and work-based networks. Putnam had inextricably linked it to civic engagement, institutional performance and economic benefits.

There are various problems with Putnam's overall hypothesis. One is that the argument is circular. Putnam had diagnosed a contemporary problem and traced it back through history. Portes wrote that the argument of *Making Democracy Work* basically says: 'if your town is "civic," it does civic things; if it is "uncivic" it does not.'[125] At some point a civic society has to be established and Harriss and De Renzio assert that:

> How the problems of collective action which constrain reciprocity and civic engagement are overcome in the first place is a problem which is not really addressed, and indeed it is stated that "where no prior example of successful civic collaboration exists, it is more difficult to overcome barriers of suspicion and shirking".[126]

Therefore collective action needs a starting point in order to make a successful precedent. Putnam takes up this challenge in his later work where he explores the possibility of fostering social capital and civic engagement.

The difference between social capital and civic engagement is never made entirely clear. The two appear closely related, but precisely how high stocks of social capital can be separated from greater civic engagement remains unanswered. The measures of civicness are also not entirely satisfactory. For example, to assume that it is an act of civicness to vote in referendums and that to choose someone on a party list is being uncivic[127] is not something that can be accepted definitively. There is also a failure to use qualitative research methods that might be useful, such as interviews with members of associations on their experiences of associational

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[125] Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', p. 20.
[126] Harriss and De Renzio, ''Missing Link' or Analytically Missing?', p. 924. The quotation is from: Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 174.
[127] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work,* pp. 91-99.

activity. This type of micro-analysis might provide insights into the alleged outcomes of these groups' activities.

The lack of emphasis on political factors, and also the virtual absence of considerations of social and economic inequality are further weaknesses and a major flaw of the work as a whole. A study of the development of southern Italy that is virtually devoid of economic considerations is surely questionable. While civil society is important, it is not enough when considering institutional performance, which is effected by a great variety of other factors i.e. social, political, and economic.

Overall, the book is an important and dynamic study that links diverse concepts and data. Unfortunately, it hardly has the length to cover the multitude of issues it raises so compellingly. While the different types of methods are impressive, again they suffer from not having enough space devoted to them, or enough discussion of how they triangulate. Putnam's use of social capital is interesting, but underdeveloped. While his model of social capital is not always coherent, the book provided a foundation for further usage and development of the concept. Thus it is important to consider how Putnam uses and builds the concept in his later work.

1.2.) The application of the concept of social capital to America

In *Making Democracy Work* Putnam produces a concept of social capital. He presents a study that integrates its societal effects, which can seemingly be applied to any society. Perhaps inevitably he turned his attention to his native America, yet he did not do so in the same manner as he had done in Italy. Putnam published several articles in the mid-1990s that attracted wide discussion beyond academia. It appeared that the level of civic engagement in America had fallen over the last few decades and Putnam believed that this was because of a decline in social capital.[128] This decline was particularly significant because America is seen as being more civic than most other nations. American exceptionalism in this regard has been well documented. In *Democracy in America* Tocqueville examines what is still a relatively new democracy. For Tocqueville America is unique: '[the] country is the only one in the world where the continual exercise of the right of association has been introduced into civil life, and where all the advantages which civilisation can confer are procured by means of it.'[129] Over a century later Almond and Verba assert that America and Britain most closely approximate their ideal of civic culture,[130] which they define as a culture 'based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it'.[131] What Putnam contends is that while America still outranks many other nations in its level of community involvement and social trust, Americans are currently less civically engaged than in the past.[132]

The decline in social capital was famously illustrated by Putnam highlighting the fall in league bowling by 40% while the number of bowlers had increased by

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[128]See Putnam, 'The Prosperous Community'; Putnam, R. D. 1995. 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining social capital', *Journal of Democracy* 6: 1 pp. 65-78; Putnam, R. D. 1995. 'Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America', *PS: Political Science & Politics* Dec, pp. 664-683. p. 666. The article was also published in a slightly different form as Putnam, R. D. 1996. 'Who Killed Civic America?', *Prospect.* March pp. 66-72.

[129] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 138.

[130] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. 360.

[131] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. 8.

[132] See Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining social capital' and Putnam, 'Tuning In, Tuning Out'.

10%.[133] For Putnam people bowling alone is symptomatic of the erosion of social connectedness and the effects this declining number of civil groups has had on the wider polity. His study of falling civic engagement in America helped to bring the concept of social capital to popular attention. The image of the lone bowler effectively symbolised the loss of community, and even inspired passages of President Clinton's 1995 State of the Union address.[134] Yet the use of the concept social capital had changed, and as a research enterprise his American work is very different to *Making Democracy Work*.

Whereas in Italy Putnam asserted that levels of social capital were established over nine hundred years ago and fixed into regions with high stocks (the north) and low stocks (the south), in America it appeared to be rapidly disappearing nationally in just a few decades. Lemann notes that: '[i]n Putnam's Italian model the kind of overnight deterioration of civic virtue that he proposes regarding America would be inconceivable – once civic virtue is in place it is incredibly durable over the centuries'.[135] Putnam would perhaps argue that America had unusually high civic virtue in the first place and the decline had not made it an *uncivic* society, rather a *less civic* one. However, as will be demonstrated, the central premises of his two major works are different.

It is worth noting that Putnam shows little interest in engaging in debates about the merits of the concept of social capital in his new venture, despite the wealth of comment and criticism outlined earlier.[136] It is an attitude that has changed little since (although he has made some recent adjustments which are examined at the end of the chapter). He did, however, acknowledge some of the controversies surrounding the concept, and his interpretation of it, in another article published in the mid-1990s which implied that empirical data should be used to clarify conceptual issues:

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[133] Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining social capital', p. 70.
[134] Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', p. 19.
[135] Lemann, N. 1996. 'Kicking in Groups', *Atlantic Monthly* 277, pp. 22-26. p. 25 quoted in Jackman and Miller, 'Social capital and Politics', p. 57.
[136] Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining social capital', p. 665.

> Social capital, in short, refers to social connections and attendant norms and trust. Who benefits from these connections, norms, and trust – the individual, the wider community, or some faction within the community – must be determined empirically, not definitionally.[137]

As will be demonstrated below, Putnam does not elaborate on many key conceptual issues to any great degree.

1.2.1.) *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*

In 2000 Putnam published *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, a widely discussed book that was a culmination of his work on social capital in America. It utilised a great deal of data from a variety of sources, and the analysis of the American situation had become more sophisticated than his original suppositions in earlier articles. He asserts that there have been many fluctuations in the level of social capital in America during the twentieth century, and that civic activity rose and then peaked in the middle of the century, before steeply declining at its end.

Whilst the concept of social capital is central to *Bowling Alone*, there is little sustained analysis of it, although there are some important modifications to the concept that will be examined shortly. It is important to note that the book is written for a general audience, which is reflected in the conversational tone of its language, and tends not to indulge in too many conceptual and methodological deliberations. There is some slightly more substantial material in the footnotes and appendix, however, although corroborating data is not consistently presented.

Firstly, this section examines Putnam's account of the decline in political, civic, and various other forms of participation in America. The empirical material he uses to explain the decline will then be looked at, before examining the historical study of a previous turning point for civic engagement in America. Finally, there

[137] For example, he stated in a journal article: 'I do not intend here to survey (much less contribute to) the development of the concept of social capital.' Putnam, 'Tuning In, Tuning Out', p. 665.

will be a consideration of how the concept of social capital has changed and been clarified from *Making Democracy Work.*

1.2.2.) The findings of *Bowling Alone*

The overall hypothesis of *Bowling Alone* is that there has been a decline in engagement in various spheres of American life (such as church going, political participation, and general civic activity) and that this is linked to a fall in levels of social capital. Putnam asserts that civic engagement has fluctuated greatly:

> For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities, but a few decades ago – silently, without warning – that tide reversed and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current. Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century.[138]

Putnam provides numerous datasets that appear to support this. He triangulates various sources such as voting patterns, group membership, and survey data about how people spend their day. It is worth noting at the outset that the results he presents generally conform to what will be referred to as the *Bowling Alone* pattern, which is participation rising in the early part of the century, peaking in the 1950s, and then steeply declining from the 1970s onwards.

1.2.3.) Trends in civic engagement and social capital

This section will look at Putnam's findings on political and civic participation, reciprocity, honesty and trust, all of which appear to have declined.

[138] Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon & Schuster. p. 27.

1.2.3.1.) Civic engagement

The number of associations have mushroomed in the era that Putnam claims there has been general civic decline. He cites the *Encyclopaedia of Associations*, which records national non-profit organisations doubling from 10,299 in 1968 to 22,901 in 1997. Taking into account population growth this is an increase of two thirds.[139] Putnam contends that this rise should not be taken at face value because not all groups have mass memberships, and some do not have any members at all. He cites David Horton Smith who asserts that 'barely half of the groups in the 1988 *Encyclopaedia of Associations* actually had individual members.'[140] Putnam believes that the explosion in the number of associations is only of groups of a certain sort i.e. those that do not rely on a membership base:

> ...over this quarter century the number of voluntary associations roughly tripled, but the average membership seems to be roughly one-tenth as large – more groups, but most of them much smaller. The organizational eruption between the 1960s and the 1990s represented a proliferation of letterheads, not a boom of grassroots participation.[141]

The groups are often more professionally-based than previously and do not have the member participation or interaction conducive to producing social capital: '[o]ne distinctive feature of a social capital-creating formal organization is that it includes local chapters in which members can meet one another.'[142] Putnam outlines how these new groups, 'tertiary associations', are significantly different from classic 'secondary associations'. He believes that they are not suitable for producing social capital for their members: '[t]heir ties are to common symbols, common leaders, and perhaps common ideals, but *not* to each other.'[143]

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[139] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 49.
[140] Putnam, *Bowling Alone,* p. 49. Ref: Smith, D. H. 1992. 'National Nonprofit, Voluntary Associations: Some Parameters', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 21 (Spring), pp. 81-94.
[141] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 49.
[142] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 51.
[143] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 52.

Putnam addresses the issue of interaction by using various other types of survey data. Three major archives which have recorded engagement since the mid-1970s are used: the General Social Survey (GSS), the Roper Social and Political Trends archive, and the DDB Needham Life Style archive. In the GSS the decline in individual membership to at least one association is slight: from just under 75% of the sample in the mid-1970s to just under 70% in the early 1990s.[144] Yet in the Roper Social and Political Trends archive, *active* participation appears to have diminished. For example, taking an active leadership role in any local organisation was cut by more than 50% between 1973 and 1994.[145] The DDB Needham Life Style archive asks respondents how many times they have attended a club meeting in the last year. This had declined from an average of twelve in 1975-76 to five in 1999. Whereas 64% of Americans attended at least one meeting in 1975-76 only 38% did in 1999.[146] In addition to these data sources Putnam also cites 'time-diary' data. In this data source 7% of the respondents claimed to have spent time with a community organisation on an average day in 1965 compared to 3% in 1995.[147] He asserts that the decline is even more dramatic than it first appears because education levels – traditionally an indicator of higher civic engagement – have increased in this period.[148]

1.2.3.2.) Political participation

Putnam believes that the 'character of Americans' involvement with politics and government has been transformed over the past three decades.'[149] While it is not the most dramatic case of decline examined in *Bowling Alone*, Putnam notes how it is one of the most widely discussed. The first measure he uses is the turnout for presidential elections. In 1960 62.8% of voting age Americans voted, whereas in

[144] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 59.
[145] Putnam, *Bowling Alone,* pp. 59-60.
[146] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 60-61.
[147] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 61-62.
[148] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 62.
[149] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 31.

1996 only 48.9% did.[150] Putnam believes that the actual decline is worse because of the improvement in voter registration in this time, with less people now being disenfranchised. The decline seems to be mainly due to generational change, a recurring theme in *Bowling Alone*:

> Beneath the ups and downs of individual elections, however, virtually all the long-run decline in turnout is due to the gradual replacement of voters who came of age before or during the New Deal and World War II by the generations who came of age later.[151]

Turnout is only one measure of political participation, and may be affected by other factors. Yet Putnam finds that other political indicators are also in decline. Active membership in political parties has drastically fallen even though funding has increased: '[w]hile membership in a political club was cut in half between 1967 and 1987, the fraction of the public that contributed financially to a political campaign nearly doubled.'[152] This indicates a significant shift in the political industry from mobilisation of active participation to mobilising finances: 'Financial capital – the wherewithal for mass marketing – has steadily replaced social capital – that is, grassroots citizen networks – as the coin of the realm.'[153]

1.2.3.3.) Reciprocity, honesty and trust

Putnam reiterates how important trust and the principle of generalised reciprocity are, and describes the latter as 'the touchstone' of social capital.[154] Whereas 'thick' trust can be found in dense social networks, it is 'thin' trust that is viewed as more important as 'it extends the radius of trust beyond the roster of people whom we can know personally.'[155] Putnam believes that trust contributes to many other things,

[150] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 31-32.
[151] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 33.
[152] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 40.
[153] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 40.
[154] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 134.
[155] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 136.

such as volunteering and political and community organisations, and also that those that trust 'display many other forms of civic virtue.'[156] These are the kind of traits that he attributes to the citizens of a civic community in *Making Democracy Work.* Yet the causal relationship remains unclear: '[t]he causal arrows among civic involvement, reciprocity, honesty, and social trust are as tangled as well-tossed spaghetti. Only careful, even experimental, research will be able to sort them apart definitively.'[157] In the footnotes he notes that while this debate is important it 'is only tangential to my concern here.'[158]

Putnam finds a decline in social trust in the specified period. The percentage of people that say 'Most people can be trusted' instead of 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people' has declined from just over the middle of the 50% bracket in 1960, to the middle of the 30% bracket in 1999. The decline is even more pronounced among high school students as their levels of trust has slipped into the middle of the 20% bracket.[159] Since the mid-1970s positive responses to the statement 'most people are honest' have declined in all age groups, and each cohort has been less trusting than the previous one. The response of those who came of age in the mid-1980s has hovered at the 50% level since they reached adulthood, the lowest level of all cohorts.[160]

1.2.3.4.) Summary of the decline in American engagement

Putnam asserts that traditional forms of engagement have declined, along with more informal interaction such as socialising. Although they have been replaced in some cases by different types of participation, these do not have the same level of collective outcomes. Self-interest appears to be increasingly taking precedence: '[p]lace-based social capital is being supplanted by function-based social capital. We are withdrawing from those networks of reciprocity that once constituted our

[156] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 137.
[157] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 137.
[158] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 466. n15.
[159] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 141.
[160] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 141.

communities.'[161] The purported decline, from formal groups to socialising, is startling. The methodology of *Bowling Alone* will be examined in more depth later, but it is sufficient to note for the time being that the sheer amount of data suggesting a decline in the last three decades is compelling. There are a few countertrends, and for Putnam the most promising are: the rise in youth volunteering; the growth in telecommunication, the internet in particular; the growth of activity among grassroots conservationists; and the increase in self-help support groups. Overall, however, he believes that these are not enough to halt the general civic decline at the present time.[162] While there is less data spanning the twentieth century as a whole, what there is mostly follows the *Bowling Alone* pattern.

1.2.4.) The reasons why there has been a decline in social capital and civic engagement

Using quantitative data Putnam considers various factors that might be responsible for the civic decline, such as: pressures of time and money; mobility and sprawl; technology and the mass media; and generational change. The table below is his approximate estimate of the extent that each of the various factors contributed to the civic malaise:

[161] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 184.
[162] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 148-180.

Table 1.1.) Reasons for disengagement

Reasons	**Approximate percentage**
Pressures of money (including two career families)	10%
Suburbanization, commuting and sprawl	10%
Electronic Entertainment	25%
Generational change	50%
Other	5%

Note: 10-15% of the total change might be attributed to the joint effect of generation and TV.[163]

This is a rough estimate that Putnam has derived from – although the data is not provided – multiple regression analysis across all the major data sets in the study and all of the major indicators of social and political participation. The basic approach was to test '[h]ow much would civic participation or social capital have declined if the relevant causal factor[...] had *not* changed over the last third of twentieth century'[164]

Bowling Alone's hypothesis is therefore that generational change is the largest factor responsible for civic decline in America. Putnam asserts that the cohort that form the 'long civic generation' – those born between 1910 and 1940 – are consistently shown to be more civically minded. With a few fluctuations, the same pattern emerges again and again. Putnam controls for education, and asserts that those born before 1940 voted more, read more newspapers, trusted more, and participated in more community and collective events.[165] Yet only one quarter of those born in the cohort were educated beyond high school, compared with more than half after that date, which is particularly intriguing as Putnam asserts that education increases civicness. The time-series data shows that these citizens participated more when they were young than the generations that followed at a

[163] Table and note based on data in Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 283-284.
[164] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 486 n11.
[165] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 253.

comparable age. The succeeding generations also appear to be less patriotic and more materialistic.[166]

Putnam asserts that while not all the changes are generational: '[t]he declines in church attendance, voting, political interest, campaign activities, associational membership, and social trust are attributable almost entirely to generational succession.'[167] Yet the less formal socialising, the 'schmoozing', such as playing cards and entertaining at home, have occurred *within* all age cohorts.[168] Some activities have been the victims of both generational and society-wide change. Whilst the younger cohorts still have strong ties to family, friends and co-workers, these ties are 'no longer complemented and reinforced by ties to the wider community.'[169]

Why the long civic cohort is so civically minded is a matter for conjecture. The experience of the second world war may have helped to foster a collective identity: '[t]he war ushered in a period of intense patriotism nationally and civic activism locally. It directly touched nearly everyone in the country.'[170] It appears that times of crisis can bond a population. The turbulent middle of the twentieth century was the key bonding experience for the 'long civic generation'. On the current evidence their ultimate disappearance will exacerbate the civic decline dramatically. The reasons for the civicness of this generation are important to ascertain in order to be able to explain the civic decline, although it is hardly explored by Putnam. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups with surviving members of this generation, might help to provide an insight into their extraordinary civic activity, but Putnam does not attempt this.

Something that may be connected to the effect of generational change is that the 'long civic generation' was the last to be brought up without television. The generations that followed differed greatly:

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[166] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 273.
[167] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 265.
[168] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 265-6.
[169] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 275.
[170] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 268.

> ...men and women raised in the sixties, seventies, and eighties not only watch television *more* than those born in the thirties, forties, and fifties: they also watch television *differently* – more habitually, even mindlessly – and those different ways in which television is used are linked in turn to different degrees of civic engagement.[171]

Putnam is unsure about the extent of the crossover between these important factors, yet he believes that the absence of television alone in their formative years cannot explain the activities of this exemplary cohort.[172] However, identifying the "long civic generation" is only the first step towards an explanation of the civic decline. The reasons *why this generation was so civically minded* is the vital factor, something that is not explored in any great depth in the book.

1.2.5.) The historical study: The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era

Just as *Making Democracy Work* includes an historical study of Italian civic engagement, there is a chapter in *Bowling Alone* that attempts to ascertain how America became so civic in the middle of the twentieth century and attempts to demonstrate why this civic renewal happened after a period of decline, as indicated in the quantitative data.

Putnam looks at two key eras in American history, the 'Gilded Age' (approximately 1870-1900) and the 'Progressive Era' (approximately 1900-1915).[173] In the first period there was extreme change following the American civil war. This included mass industrialisation, urbanisation, and mass immigration. Putnam draws parallels with the present day:

> America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century suffered from classic symptoms of a social-capital deficit – crime waves, degradation in the cities,

[171] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 272.
[172] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 284.
[173] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 367.

> inadequate education, a widening gap between rich and poor, what one contemporary called a "Saturnalia" of political corruption.[174]

Then came a period of intense revival. Whereas Italy's situation appeared to be static, America experienced radical transformation:

> Within a few decades around the turn of the century, a quickening sense of crisis, coupled with inspired grassroots and national leadership, produced an extraordinary burst of social inventiveness and political reform. In fact, most of the major community institutions in American life today were invented or refurbished in that most fecund period of civic innovation in American history.[175]

This is a key part of Putnam's argument, as he hopes it provides a precedent for the modern era. There was intense economic distress from 1893 to 1897, followed by the two decades of prosperity that 'gave birth to a broad and internally diverse Progressive coalition united in the optimistic assumption that society was capable of improvement via intentional reform.'[176] The fact that there was a concerted and *conscious* effort to improve society is important to Putnam's belief that there can be civic renewal in contemporary America.

The massive rise in civic activity in this era was aided by the massive increase in voluntary associations in the last decades of the nineteenth century during the Gilded Age. In a journal article Gamm and Putnam assert that: 'most types of associations grew rapidly in number, relative to population, between 1850 and 1900, with slower growth through to 1910.'[177] Significantly, not only were a considerable number of associations formed in that time, but they have also proved durable. Skocpol states that half of all the largest mass membership organisations over the last two centuries were founded between 1870 and 1920. More startlingly,

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[174] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 368.
[175] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 368.
[176] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 370.
[177] Gamm, G. and Putnam, R. D. 2001. 'The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940', in Rotberg, R. I. (ed) *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 173-217. p. 176.

half of the *current* large membership organisations date from this period.[178] Putnam asserts that 'to a remarkable extent American civil society at the close of the twentieth century still rested on organizational foundations laid at the beginning of the century.'[179]

Putnam cites McCormick's assertion that voluntary associations had a central role in the reform process during the Progressive Era. According to McCormick each reform campaign had a pattern:

> They typically began by organizing a voluntary association, investigating a problem, gathering relevant facts, and analyzing them according to the precepts of one of the newer social sciences. From such an analysis a proposed solution would emerge, be popularized through campaigns of education and moral suasion, and – as often as not, if it seemed to work – be taken over by some level of government as a public function.[180]

This is indicative of Putnam's own society-centred vision, with civil society perceived as being the driving force of reform, as opposed to political and economic factors.

The Progressive Era was certainly a period of change. Painter asserts that '[d]uring this progressive era public opinion grew more tolerant of dissent and less bound by convention, and change to increase economic equity generally began to seem desirable.'[181] Although it was a broad and diverse movement, for Putnam the overall effect was one of collective action: '[i]n the successful efforts to establish playgrounds, civic museums, kindergartens, public parks, and the like, an important

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[178] See Skocpol, T. 1999.'How Americans Became Civic', Skocpol, T. and Fiorina, M. P. (eds) *Civic Engagement in American Democracy.* Washington D. C.: Brookings Institutional Press. pp. 27-80. pp. 72-75 for details. Mass memberships organisations are defined as those that have ever enrolled 1% of the male or female population.

[179] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 385.

[180] McCormick, R. L. 1990. 'Public Life in Industrial America, 1877-1917', in Foner, E. *The New American History.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 93-117. p. 107. Quoted in Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 396.

[181] Painter, N. 1987. *Standing at Armageddon: The United States 1877-1919.* New York: W.W Norton. p. 279

part of the rationale was to strengthen habits of cooperation, while not stifling individualism.'[182]

Ultimately Putnam believes that the vibrant civil society helped to instigate political reform. He notes that there were downsides to the era, such as the preference for technocratic and social elitism, and the development of the homogeneous communities that still have a damaging legacy today. While he asserts that the earlier era should not be directly emulated and that nostalgia should be avoided, he does believe that its example can provide inspiration for a new era of civic renewal.

1.2.6.) Changes to the concept of social capital in *Bowling Alone*

This section fulfils a different function to the earlier section looking at the criticisms of the concept of social capital in *Making Democracy Work.* It will not retread the previous criticisms where they are still relevant, but rather this section will look at how the concept has changed. While Putnam rarely directly addresses criticisms of his earlier work, several important modifications to his concept of social capital were made in *Bowling Alone,* and a few have improved it. The various amendments to the concept include: less emphasis on voluntary associations; revaluating the role of trust; some consideration of the dark side of social capital; adopting the bonding and bridging distinction; and contemplating whether social capital is merely being used as a new term for old debates.

1.2.6.1.) Networks and the role of voluntary associations

Networks appear to have a greater significance in the definition of social capital in *Bowling Alone* than before. Putnam asserts in the book that the 'core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value.'[183] While he had tended to focus on

[182] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 394-5.
[183] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 18-19.

voluntary associations as an example of social networks in the past, he attempts to clarify the issue:

> I do not believe, nor have I ever believed, that associations were some privileged form of social capital, except in the sense that associations tend to gather data on themselves and, therefore, it is easier to gather data on associations. Beyond this greater ease of measurement, there is nothing canonically superior about formal associations as forms of social networks.[184]

Putnam always seemed to champion formal networks and, despite his protestations, it was only in *Bowling Alone* that he incorporated material on more informal socialising. This greater conceptual and empirical complexity is a strength of *Bowling Alone*, and an improvement on his earlier work.

Putnam outlines how voluntary organisations and informal networks have two important functions: the 'internal' effects, (i.e. the benefits for the participants), and the 'external' effects, (i.e. the benefits for the wider community). The first aspect is straightforward, that they 'instil in their members habits of cooperation and public spiritedness, as well as the practical skills necessary to partake in public life.'[185] Beyond this function they have external effects which:

> ...allow individuals to express their interests and demands on government and to protect themselves from abuses of power by their political leaders. Political information flows through social networks, and in these networks public life is discussed.[186]

This is similar to Almond and Verba's view of voluntary associations providing a potential political resource in *The Civic Culture*. They attempt to demonstrate Tocqueville's assertion that associations have wider benefits, and they see such associations as being a key intermediary between the individual and the state:

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[184] Putnam, R. D. 2001. 'Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences', ISUMA 2 (1), pp. 41-51. p. 43.
[185] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 338.
[186] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 338.

> These associations help him avoid the dilemma of being either a parochial, cut off from political influence, or an isolated and powerless individual, manipulated and mobilized by the mass institutions of politics and government. The availability of his primary groups as a political resource in times of threat gives him an intermittent political resource.[187]

Putnam also sees these associations as providing training in citizenship: 'voluntary associations are places where social and civic skills are learned – "schools for democracy."'[188]

1.2.6.2.) The role of trust

The role of social trust in Putnam's social capital definition remains problematic. Jonathan Grix notes that it is not clear whether trust is the result of, or a prerequisite for, social capital in Putnam's work. Others, such as Michael Woolcock, have also questioned whether Putnam considers trust as social capital or as one of its outcomes.[189] Putnam addresses this issue more recently and agrees with Woolcock's assertion that social trust is not social capital, but a consequence of it.[190] Yet Putnam makes a qualification to this: 'social trust is not part of the definition of social capital but it is certainly a close consequence, and therefore could be easily thought of as a proxy.'[191] So the assumption is that social capital always leads to social trust. While this makes the definition clearer – with trust clearly identified as a consequence – Putnam's concept is still rather opaque in this respect.

[187] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. 245.
[188] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 338.
[189] Grix, J. 2001. 'Social Capital as a Concept in the Social Sciences: The Current State of the Debate', *Democratization*. 8 (3), pp. 189-210. p. 202.
[190] See Woolcock, 'The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes', p. 13.
[191] Putnam, 'Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences', p. 45.

1.2.6.3.) The "dark side" of social capital

It has been noted that many authors criticise *Making Democracy Work* for ignoring the possible negative effects of social capital. Although Putnam does not devote much space to these specific criticisms, he does ponder some of the implications of the "dark side" of social capital in *Bowling Alone*. He notes, for example, that not all voluntary associations are positive for wider society, e.g. the Ku Klux Klan.[192] Putnam attempts to discover whether there is an empirical link between high levels of social capital and high levels of intolerance in order to see if it is a malign force. He examines communities high in social capital to see whether they are also high in intolerance, but finds no direct correlation.[193]

1.2.6.4.) The bonding and bridging social capital distinction

The single most important development in the concept of social capital in *Bowling Alone* is the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital, a differentiation Putnam credits to others.[194] Dense networks with strong ties, such as closed communities, often produce what he terms "bonding" social capital. Weak ties are perceived as being potentially more powerful and as providing "bridging" social capital. The terms are used to distinguish between two very different functions of social capital and address some of the issues relating to the dark side of social capital. Putnam outlines the effects of bonding social capital:

> Bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Dense networks in ethnic enclaves, for example, provide crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs.[195]

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[192] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 340.
[193] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 355.
[194] Putnam credits the labels to: Gittell, R. & Vidal, A. 1998. *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage p. 8. cited in Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 446 n20.
[195] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 22.

Dense networks are often used as examples of social capital, including Putnam's earlier work on Italy, as will become apparent in the later chapters of this thesis. Putnam then outlines the benefits of bridging social capital:

> Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. Economic sociologist Mark Granovetter has pointed out that when seeking jobs – or political allies – the "weak" ties that link me to distant acquaintances who move in different circles from mine are actually more valuable than the "strong" ties that link me to relatives and intimate friends whose sociological niche is very like my own.[196]

Significantly, bridging social capital is mooted by Putnam as something that crosses cleavages and therefore provides more beneficial connections: 'bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrow selves.'[197] The problem with closed communities (high in bonding social capital) is that they often exclude outsiders. However, Putnam is not dismissive of the outcomes of bonding social capital and believes that both types 'can have powerfully positive social effects'.[198] Yet negative social capital normally derives from bonding, not bridging, social capital.

There is no doubt that the bonding and bridging distinction is important and that it is symptomatic of how Putnam's concept has been partially developed in response to sustained criticism, and has become stronger because of it. However, despite the conceptual value of the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital, it is difficult to differentiate between the two empirically. Whereas bonding social capital can be seemingly simple to observe, bridging social capital is more intangible. Putnam warns that the two types of social capital are not interchangeable, although he does not outline how the two might be distinguished in future empirical studies.[199] While Putnam and Feldstein do record qualitative aspects of bridging social capital (social networks that cross cleavages) in *Better Together*, they do not

[196] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 22-23.
[197] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 23.
[198] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 23.
[199] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 23-24.

provide quantitative measures.[200] Pamela Paxton has recently attempted to operationalise the distinction by using associations with members who had memberships to other associations as an indicator of bridging social capital.[201] Sonja Zmerli also tries to apply the distinction quantitatively. She does this by using some of Mark Warren's distinctions about associations. Zmerli classifies associations as providing bonding social capital if their constitutive goods are either exclusive group identity goods or individual material goods; and as providing bridging social capital when they provide interpersonal identity goods, inclusive social goods, or public material goods.[202]

1.2.6.5.) New terminology for old debates

Putnam notes that social capital, to a certain extent, is part of an old debate in American political circles, namely that of the benefits of the community over the individual.[203] He addresses the issue of whether social capital is merely a new term for old concepts, such as civic virtue:

> ...social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.[204]

Therefore while Putnam notes that social capital is closely linked to civic virtue, he also believes that it does not refer to the same thing. It is interesting that he

[200] Putnam, R D. and Feldstein, L. W. with Cohen D. 2003. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community.* New York: Simon and Schuster.
[201] Paxton, P. 2002. 'Social capital and democracy: An interdependent relationship', *American Sociological Review* 67 April, 254-277. pp. 270-2.
[202] Zmerli, S. 2003. 'Applying the Concepts of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital to Empirical research', *European Political Science* Summer, pp. 68-75. pp. 71-73.
[203] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 24.
[204] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 19.

emphasises dense networks as being important in aiding civic virtue, opposed to weak ties.

1.2.6.6.) Summary of the revised concept of social capital in *Bowling Alone*

There are several key changes that Putnam makes to the concept of social capital in *Bowling Alone* that improve it. Firstly, he removes trust from the definition, which is important because he recognises trust is a consequence of social capital and not social capital itself. Secondly, the definition of networks more clearly includes less formal interaction, such as socialising, as well as more formal networks, such as voluntary associations. This means that voluntary associations – problematic as sole indicators of social capital due to their unique properties – are less prominent. Thirdly, the bonding and bridging distinction adds conceptual sophistication and addresses many of issues relating to the dark side of social capital.

1.2.7.) Summary of *Bowling Alone*

Putnam does not directly build upon his Italian case-study when applying social capital to America. While there is nothing wrong with a longitudinal study of social capital instead of a comparative one, Putnam does not explain how social capital levels were relatively static in Italy but fluctuate dramatically in America. At the end of *Making Democracy Work* Putnam quotes a regional president from an "uncivic" region who said: 'This is a counsel of despair! You're telling me that nothing I can do will improve our prospects for success. The fate of the reform was sealed centuries ago.'[205] Yet in America levels of social capital appear to radically change in a few decades and can be consciously fostered. This might be because of national differences, but he does not offer a comparative evaluation of his two case-studies. However, Putnam does look at cross-national comparisons in the conclusion to the collection *Democracies in Flux*, which is considered at the end of this chapter.

[205] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 183.

Overall, *Bowling Alone* presents a convincing argument that there has been a decline in civic engagement in America during the last few decades and that this is mainly due to generational change and the rise of electronic entertainment. What is not clear is social capital's *causal* role in this or how it is separate from a general propensity for civic engagement. The concept of social capital is not deployed consistently in the book and the work represents a failed opportunity to build upon some of the more promising aspects of Putnam's Italian study.

1.3.) The "Putnam School" of social capital

To find some correctives to the deficiencies in Putnam's work on social capital, it is worth first of all examining those authors who follow him most closely. Despite the fact that much of the work in political sciences on social capital makes criticisms of and qualifications to Putnam's work, most appear to accept his basic assumptions and several authors refer to a "Putnam School" of social capital.[206] Grix identifies various "paradigms" of social capital and asserts that the "Putnam School" is the most dominant:

> ...the 'Putnam School', consists of a group of scholars who seek to employ Putnam's definition of social capital and, more importantly, though to different degrees, emulate the quantitative research methods employed by Putnam to 'measure' the concept in his study of Italy. This research paradigm has advanced our thinking on the concept of social capital, but has done so in keeping with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of Putnam's own work.[207]

This is a fair summary of much of work in the political sciences on social capital and how Putnam's ideas remain at the heart of them. Yet while Putnam's more detailed empirical work is relegated to footnotes and appendices (or is indeed undocumented), much of the rest of the field is almost entirely empirically driven. The writers in the Putnam School usually accept Putnam's work in essence and investigate various empirical, rather than conceptual, matters. For example, Halpern has produced an extensive study of social capital looking at health, crime, education and government. In fact he declares that his definition of social capital is even broader than Putnam's.[208] Following Putnam, Halpern uses the term social capital in a very general sense to look at various social, political and economic phenomena. He

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[206] For example see: Grix, 'Social capital as a Concept in the Social Sciences'; McLean, S. L., Schultz, D. A., and Steger, M. B. 2002.'Introduction', in McLean, S. L., Schultz, D. A., & Steger, M. B. (eds). *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives on Community and "Bowling Alone"*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 1-17; and Maloney, W., Smith, G., and Stoker, G. 2000. 'Social Capital and Urban Governance: Adding a More Contextualised 'Top-down' Perspective', *Political Studies*, 48, pp. 802-820.

[207] Grix, 'Social capital as a Concept in the Social Sciences', pp. 190-191.

[208] Halpern, *Social Capital.* p. ix

subscribes to Putnam's basic position but asserts that he would be just as happy with the term "social fabric" as "social capital".

There has been a lot of empirical investigation about the correlation between measures of social capital and various outcomes. Researchers have followed Putnam in testing whether voluntary associations produce trust, and also considering whether social capital is correlated with particular outcomes. Much of the work within the Putnam School predominately uses social trust and/or associations as measures. There are conflicting views about whether it is trust or voluntary associations that have the most beneficial effects. Stolle looks at the possible link between generalised trust and membership of associations, and asserts that trusting people tend to join associations, not vice versa.[209] Norris also asserts that empirical evidence suggests that trust and not associations is the key factor driving political participation: 'if we disentangle the twin components of Putnam's definition of social capital what is driving this process is primarily the social trust dimension, *not* the associational network dimension.'[210] Uslaner has written various works looking at social capital specifically in the context of moralistic trust.[211] He believes that moralistic trust is learnt from parents, not adult life experiences; and that it is unconditional.[212] Uslaner therefore sees trust as fixed and not resulting from membership of voluntary organisations: '[i]t is not the types of organization that you join that determines whether you will develop trust, but rather the type of trust you

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[209] Stolle, D. 2001. '"Getting to trust" An analysis of the importance of institutions, families, personal experiences and group membership', in Dekker and Uslaner (eds). *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life.* London: Routledge, pp. 118-133. p. 131. See also: Stolle, D. and Rochon, T. R. 2001. 'Are All Associations Alike?', in Edwards, Foley, and Diani, *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*, pp. 143-156. p. 154; Stolle, D. and Rochon, T. R. 1999. "The myth of American exceptionalism: A three-nation comparison of associational membership and social capital", in Van Deth, J. W., Maraffi, M., Newton, K., Whitely, P. F. 1999. *Social Capital and European Democracy.* London: Routledge ,pp. 192-209. p. 205; Stolle, D. '"Getting to trust"', p. 124.

[210] Norris, P. 2002. 'Making democracies work: Social capital and civic engagement in 47 societies', *Rusel Papers – Civic Series* 3, pp. 34-69. p. 48

[211] See Uslaner, 2001. 'Volunteering and social capital: How trust and religion shape civic participation in the United States', Dekker and Uslaner (eds). *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*, pp. 104-117. p. 106; Uslaner, 1999. 'Morality plays: Social capital and moral behaviour in Anglo-American democracies', in Van Deth, Maraffi, Newton, and Whitely, *Social Capital and European Democracy.* London: Routledge, pp 213-239. p. 215. Italics in original. Uslaner, 2002.'Trust as a moral value', *Rusel Papers – Civic Series* 2 pp. 7-35. p. 14.

[212] Uslaner, 'Trust as a moral value', p. 14.

have that determines your level of civic engagement.'[213] In addition, Newton and Delhey assert that: '[v]oluntary organisations do not seem to do much, if anything for generalised trust in most countries.'[214] Newton also notes that over the course of their lives individuals will spend more time at school, work, with their family or in the neighbourhood than in associations.[215] He also considers the matter of whether "trusters" are more likely to join voluntary associations, rather than to develop trust from membership. He believes that it is more likely to be the former factor. This is because his research indicates that "social winners" (i.e. more successful people) are more likely to be trusting and that people that join voluntary associations tend to be social winners with comparatively high income, education, and social class, although membership 'may reinforce pre-existing levels of trust.'[216] Van Deth asserts the opposite, that political participation is linked to association membership and not to social trust.[217]

In the wake of Putnam a lot of material on social capital builds upon existing research on civic engagement, civil society, and institutional performance that predates the concept. The externalities of trust and voluntary associations have long been studied. Almond and Verba are the modern instigators of much of the work that has come to be used in the social capital debate. Skocpol asserts that, with their reliance on survey data, they have influenced most quantitative work on civic engagement.[218] The contemporary work from the "Putnam School" merely frames this type of work within the social capital discourse. Like Skocpol, Grix believes that Putnam and the "Putnam School" are the direct descendents of Almond and Verba:

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[213] Uslaner, 'Trust as a moral value', p. 12.
[214] Delhey, J. and Newton, K. 2002. 'Who Trusts? The Origins of Social Trust in Seven Nations', *Research Unit: "Social Structure and Social Reporting"* Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), pp. 1-44. p. 21.
[215] Newton, K. 2001. 'Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy', *International Political Science Review* 22 (2), pp. 201-214. p. 207.
[216] Newton, 'Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy', p. 207.
[217] Van Deth, J. W. 2002. 'The Proof of the Pudding: Social Capital, democracy and Citizenship', *Rusel Papers – Civic Series* 3, pp. 7-33. pp. 31-32.
[218] Skocpol, 'How Americans Became Civic', p. 31.

> Putnam and his followers subscribe to similar ontological, epistemological and methodological premises as the fathers of political culture research, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, whose path-breaking work first appeared in the 1950s. Culture, and in the example here, social capital, is thus seen as something psychological that can be measured at the individual level in a positivist manner through the concrete and quantifiable answers to survey questions (McFalls, 2001, p. 2).[219]

These conceptual underpinnings are not questioned to any great degree by Putnam or other researchers who follow his approach, and various parts of the complex process of social capital (such as trust and associations) are merely aggregated.

On the whole the writers in the Putnam School undertake empirical investigations of social capital rather than engage in conceptual deliberations. Considering that Putnam is stronger empirically than conceptually, the School therefore looks at the less troublesome area of his work. There have, however, been some interesting empirical contributions on the relative merits of voluntary associations versus social trust, with most tending to favour the latter.

However, it should be noted that the Putnam School does little to advance the notion *conceptually.* Their work is mainly a debate about whether associational activity or social trust is correlated to civic engagement, and how associational activity and social trust are interrelated. This explains nothing about the nature of *social capital.* In the absence of a proper conceptual framework, the term "social capital" is simply a convenient overarching term under which to investigate these relationships. Therefore to address the deficiencies in Putnam's work more fundamentally different conceptual approaches need to be examined.

[219] Grix, J. 2002. 'Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research', *Politics*, 22 (3), pp. 175-186. pp. 181-2. Grix cites: McFalls, L. 2001. 'Constructing the New East German Man, 1961-2001, or Bringing Real Culture Back to Political Science', manuscript. p. 2

1.4.) Conclusion: Critically evaluating Putnam's concept of social capital

In *Making Democracy Work* Putnam developed a concept of social capital that was flawed but had potential. His later work took a different approach, which brought its own problems in addition to not addressing all of the shortcomings in the original formulation. While Putnam gives a convincing demonstration of civic decline in America, and some explanation of the reasons for this decline, *Bowling Alone* gives an unsatisfactory account of social capital's role in this process. While the empirical work in the book is plentiful, it is difficult to ascertain precisely how it links to the concept of social capital.

One of the most significant advances in Putnam's concept has been the use of more nuanced distinctions, the key one being between bonding and bridging social capital, the importance of which is examined shortly. Another example of conceptual development is between formal social capital (e.g. voluntary associations) and more informal network activity (e.g. socialising with friends). Yet there is no explanation of how less formal networks can create public goods – although they can undoubtedly produce private goods for their members – in the same way that more formal organisations do.

The fact Putnam never fully addresses all of the criticisms of his early work means that, on the whole, his later material contains many of the same flaws. Fine has noted how the industry of criticism surrounding the Putnam's concept has not helped:

> ...the response to Putnam's work has characteristically been both to undermine and to strengthen it, thereby taking it as a benchmark for social theory. The underlying foundations are demonstrably unsound. To continue the metaphor, the building could be demolished. Instead, missing fundamentals are chaotically attached to the ungainly edifice, seeking and providing scholarly accommodation for all and sundry.[220]

[220] Fine, B. 2001. *Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political Economy and Social Science at the Turn of the Millennium.* London: Routledge. p. 95

It is true that while Putnam's concept of social capital started as a promising perspective on variations in levels of civic engagement, it has not been developed systematically. He has built his later work on problematic foundations and various issues have never been properly addressed. That is not to say that Putnam's work is without merit; his range of empirical sources are impressive and he certainly has some very convincing arguments about the causes of civic decline, hence the wider appeal of his work.

There are other problems with *Bowling Alone*. One of the elements missing from Putnam's American work that was in his Italian study is a proper consideration of the historical formation of civic engagement. Putnam analyses just forty-five years of American civic activity in the historical chapter of *Bowling Alone*. He also only considers fluctuating levels of social capital *nationally* in America, and does not examine *regional* differences in the same detail as he does for Italy. He also overlooks political and economic factors in the Progressive Era. While the role of civil society was important, there were also legislative economic reforms in this period, such as progressive taxation implemented by Woodrow Wilson that are not analysed.[221] Putnam's asserts that grassroots movements in civil society mainly drove the decisive political reforms, which is also debatable.

Putnam's notion of social capital is very much a neo-Tocquevillean concept and many commentators find his focus on civil society inappropriate. Ehrenberg, for example, believes that Putnam 'fails to engage the economic and political determinations of civil society'.[222] Shapiro argues that the population of America is too fragmented to talk of one single civic culture.[223] The notion of a homogonous contemporary civil society in *Bowling Alone* is certainly questionable, and also the small communities of Tocqueville's time have little in common with large modern urban areas. With massive levels of inequality in contemporary America, Ehrenberg believes that neo-Tocquevillean thought is popular in a conservative period that champions small government, where the onus is on individuals to revive

[221] See Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, pp. 272-279.
[222] Ehrenberg, *Civil Society*, p. 227.
[223] Shapiro, M. J. 2002. 'Post-Liberal Civil Society and the Worlds of Neo-Tocquevillean Social Theory', in McLean et al *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives on Community and "Bowling Alone"*, pp. 99-124. pp.111-5.

communities and reinvigorate the public sphere. He asserts that the real political and economic roots of the civic decline are therefore ignored.[224]

There have been signs more recently that Putnam has taken note of the some criticisms of his American work and is reacting to them. In the conclusion to *Democracies in Flux* – an edited volume featuring many of the authors cited in the section on the Putnam School above – he highlights social inequality as being important:

> Most empirical research on social capital thus far has focused primarily on the quantity of social ties, but the social distribution of social capital is at least as problematic as trends in the overall quantity [...] Social capital is accumulated most among those who need it least. Social capital may conceivably be even less equitably distributed than financial and human capital.[225]

In this work Putnam finally makes a connection between social capital deficit and class and racial inequality:

> If, as a number of our authors believe, social capital that extends into the working class has been particularly disadvantaged by recent developments, that may be especially bad for equality. The apparent increase in class bias in social capital may be related to growth in income inequality noted in many advanced countries, as well as to growing ethnic fragmentation.[226]

Additionally, in May 2005 – ten years from his original article 'Bowling Alone' – he states his intention to examine some key factors currently absent in his work:

> Subsequent research supported many of the article's hypotheses, but I now think that my analysis overlooked three important factors: the growth of inequality, the

[224] Ehrenberg, J. 1999. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea.* New York: New York University Press. p. 230 & p. 233.
[225] Putnam, R. D. 2002. 'Conclusion', In Putnam, R. D. (ed), *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society.* New York: Oxford University Press, 393-416. p. 414-5.
[226] Putnam, 'Conclusion', p. 416.

> growth of diversity, and the decay of mobilizing organizations. (I'm currently engaged in research on several of those omitted forces.)[227]

It will be interesting to see to what extent the new research will provide a corrective to his current material. His considerations of the rise of inequality will be particularly intriguing.

[227] Putnam, R. 2005. '1996: The Civic Enigma', *The American Prospect Online* May 22nd, p. 1. p. 1.

1.5.) Issues arising from Putnam's work

There are various problems with Putnam's concept of social capital that have been outlined in this chapter. Yet the concept is still considered to be worth saving if possible. Therefore the rest of the thesis will look at what correctives alternative conceptions of social capital might provide. The six areas below are the main points of contention that emerge from the analysis of Putnam's work and will provide a framework when examining other work on social capital.

1.5.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

In thinking about the contribution of different authors and whether their insights can be viewed as a "corrective" to Putnam's work, we need to be sensitive to the way social capital is understood and its role within broader conceptual frameworks. Putnam – although citing various theories in his work (for example collective action dilemmas, historical institutionalism) – uses a very narrow conceptual framework. This means that his concept of social capital is rooted in civil society, isolated from other factors. Therefore the lack of consideration of broader political and economic factors in Putnam's work on social capital is problematic because civil society does not operate in a vacuum.

More recently Putnam has conceded that the production of social capital is connected to existing inequality, especially in terms of race and class.[228] The question is whether Putnam can build such considerations into his existing conception – as he has expressed the desire to do – or whether social capital would be more fruitful as part of broader conceptual or theoretical considerations. Other major authors on social capital, such as Coleman, Ostrom, Bourdieu and Lin, all explicitly consider social capital as part of a broader conceptual framework (see Chapters Two and Three).

[228] Putnam, '1996: The Civic Enigma', p. 1.

1.5.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

Putnam examines social capital mainly at the macro-level and believes that it can have individual and collective benefits. While both may be pertinent, the two levels need to be separated clearly in any analysis of social capital. He notes that while there are both private and public outcomes of social capital he focuses 'largely on the external, or public, returns to social capital'.[229] He is the only author examined in this thesis that analysises social capital at the macro-level. This, as will be demonstrated, may negate some of conceptual possibilities of social capital.

Putnam and those in the Putnam School examine social capital using aggregated quantitative data. Recently, even Putnam (writing with Goss) – after outlining various diverse forms of social capital – expresses doubts about whether it is possible to 'simply "add up" all these different forms to produce a single, sensible summary of the social capital in a given community, much less an entire nation.'[230] Later in the same chapter they state more generally that 'social capital is stubbornly resistant to quantification'.[231]

Authors tend to divide on whether social capital should be examined as a collective asset. It needs to be ascertained what level(s) is the most productive to analyse. The work of authors that examine social capital as a collective asset (Coleman and Ostrom), will be discussed in the next chapter. Network authors (Burt, Portes, Lin, and Foley and Edwards) tend to focus on the individual level, and are examined in Chapter Three.

1.5.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

In Putnam's eclectic work, the role of structure and agency are not consistently considered and his emphasis changes. Putnam believes that the fate of Italy's civicness was long historically sealed in civic and uncivic cycles. This makes his

[229] Putnam, 'Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences', p. 41.
[230] Putnam, R. D., and Goss, K. A. 2002. 'Introduction' In Putnam, R. D. (ed), *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society.* New York: Oxford University Press, 3-19. p. 8.
[231] Putnam and Goss, 'Introduction', p. 11.

American study all the more remarkable. Using compelling empirical evidence, Putnam pinpoints a generation – the "long civic generation" – that drove civic activity in a society that was markedly less civic only a few decades before and again a short time afterwards. Yet Putnam shows little interest in the structural factors that helped to drive the Progressive Era. Additionally, in Putnam's conception individuals in Southern Italy are genuinely unable to cause change, while their American counterparts can, or at least managed to in the past.

There are many instances of authors using the concept of social capital explicitly to balance/combine considerations of structure and agency (e.g. Coleman, Ostrom, and Portes and Sensenbrenner) which will be explored in the thesis.

1.5.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

Putnam is evangelical about the potential benefits of social capital for individuals, small groups and large communities. More than any other author using the concept, he looks to extol its virtues. One of the biggest criticisms of his original work is his failure to consider the possible downsides of social capital. This was partially rectified in *Bowling Alone*, but is still something that needs to be considered further. Some of the negative effects are examined by Putnam in relation to dense and closed networks, are looked at as part of the bonding/bridging distinction (see 1.5.5. below). Some authors tend to emphasise the negative aspects of social capital more – especially contextualising it in terms of broader economic inequality – and these will be examined in Chapter Three.

1.5.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

Putnam asserts that both strong and weak ties are important. Strong ties in dense networks are needed for norms of reciprocity, and weak ties can provide links beyond an individual's immediate circle. This distinction has emerged in various

forms in literature on social capital in recent years, although the terms bridging and bonding are not always used. Those that do explicitly use the terms include Narayan, Woolcock, and Halpern.[232] Other writers in the sociological tradition, such as Lin, look at similar factors under the terminology of homophilous and heterophilous relations.[233]

Most social capital authors do, however, refer to the work of Granovetter. In the seminal article 'The strength of weak ties', he challenged the then orthodox view that strong ties were more beneficial: 'weak ties, often denounced as generative of alienation...are here seen as indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities; strong ties, breeding local cohesion, lead to overall fragmentation'.[234] There is further discussion of Granovetter's work in Chapter Three.

In Putnam's work the concept of social capital is overstretched on occasions, and the bonding and bridging distinction may well be the best way for the concept to progress, as it attempts to provide more nuanced distinctions within the concept. The distinction is more sensitive to the context and value of social capital in different situations. Yet the distinction is not easy to operationalise. It is difficult to aggregate weak ties quantitatively at the macro-level because each weak tie accesses diffuse resources, in contrast to stronger ties, where each member of a group has access to similar resources or a single outcome. The effect of weak ties may only be tangible at the micro-level (as will be discussed in Chapter Three). While Putnam admitted that he was unable to consistently differentiate between bonding and bridging social capital in the empirical work in *Bowling Alone*, he has suggested more recently that the main decline has been in bonding social capital, and that rising informal interaction has addressed it partially:

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[232] Narayan, D. 1999. *Bonds and Bridges: Social Capital and Poverty.* World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2167 Washington DC: The World Bank; Woolcock, 'The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes'; and Halpern, D. 2005. *Social Capital.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

[233] Lin, N. 2001. *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[234] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1378.

> Those common declines, however, seem to be offset at least in part by increases in the relative importance of informal, fluid, personal forms of social connection, what Rothstein calls "solidaristic individualism" and what Wuthnow has called "loose connections."[235]

In Putnam's work it is conceptually that the bonding and bridging distinction is useful as it helps to explain how some groups can be limiting for their members and/or produce negative outcomes for others.

The bonding and bridging distinction represents a key development in work on social capital. While the authors examined in Chapter Two of this thesis concentrate almost entirely on what Putnam would refer to as bonding social capital, much of the work examined in Chapter Three emphases the distinction between the two, placing particular emphasis on the importance of weak ties and heterophilous relations (which is similar to bridging social capital).

1.5.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

Putnam sees certain parts of social capital as a by-product of other activities in the sense that social interaction produces "externalities" affecting the wider community: 'not all the costs and benefits of social connections accrue to the person making the contact.'[236] As will be seen in Chapters Two and Three, most other authors subscribe to the notion that social capital is mainly a by-product. However, Putnam also believes that social capital can be developed and fostered by individuals and also by nations.

The great attraction of Putnam's work is its possible insight into bettering societies. In *Bowling Alone* he highlights the potential importance of government policy in fostering social capital, if only briefly: [m]any of the most creative investments in social capital in American history – from county agents and the 4-H to community colleges and the March of Dimes – were the direct result of

[235] Putnam, 'Conclusion', pp. 411-2.
[236] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 20.

government policy.'[237] More recently in *Better Together* Putnam and Feldstein look at micro-level instances of social capital aiding collective action and also emphasise the importance of government policy on the projects featured in the case-studies in the book: 'government policies were crucial to the substantive results achieved in many cases. Indeed, in some cases specific government actions were prerequisites for the creation of social capital.'[238] These included tax codes, highway building, educational investment, government agricultural technical assistance, and state funding of a job programme.[239] This is in contrast to *Making Democracy Work*'s resignation to culturally embedded virtuous and vicious cycles of civic engagement.

There is certainly more of a normative dimension to Putnam's work on America. He produces an agenda for civic renewal and outlines the issues that need to be dealt with to reverse the trend of civic disengagement.[240] He believes that this can only be done as the result of both institutional and individual initiatives – a conscious movement for reform – similar to what happened in the Progressive Era.

That social capital might be consciously fostered in order to improve societies is an appealing notion, but it is questionable whether this is viable. As will be seen later in the thesis, particularly in Chapter Three, proper consideration of other factors related to social capital, casts doubts on some of Putnam's more ambitious claims.

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[237] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 413.
[238] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together*, p. 273.
[239] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together*, pp. 272-3.
[240] 'Toward an Agenda for Social Capitalists' in Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 402-414.

1.6.) The rest of the thesis

Having considered the work of Putnam and the "Putnam School", this thesis now turns its attention to the work of other authors who have deployed the concept/theory of social capital. No other author explicitly links social capital to the range of possible outcomes in the same manner as Putnam, although those examined in the next chapter – the collective action authors who Putnam cites as a major influence – do believe that social capital produces public goods as a by-product, but on a smaller scale.

The various approaches to social capital will be examined to see whether they can provide correctives to any of the faults in Putnam's work highlighted above – based on the six point framework – or if they demonstrate that Putnam's use of the concept is inappropriate. This will be done by examining their work on social capital, the empirical material they offer, and considering how coherent and comprehensive their version of the concept is, before summarising their work in relation to the six points.

2.) Collective Action approaches to social capital

This chapter investigates two authors who use the concept of social capital to look at collective action problems. James Coleman and Elinor Ostrom both separately formulate social capital as a relational concept in the context of the benefits of cooperation. Much of their work preceded that of Putnam, who cited both of them in *Making Democracy Work.* Putnam originally framed the concept of social capital in the context of collective action problems, but did not maintain this in his work.

While Putnam uses Coleman's definition of social capital as a starting point for his own concept, Coleman's work differs in many important respects. There is a difference in the scope of the concept, with Coleman's work taking much more of a micro-perspective, focusing on individuals and small groups, as opposed to the more macro-focused work of Putnam. In addition, Coleman presents social capital as just one part of a broader social theory, as opposed to Putnam's more elaborate use of the concept. Coleman's main aim is to correct perceived deficiencies in rational action models by placing actors' decisions in a wider social context. Significantly, Coleman asserts that there is a public good outcome from social interaction that aids a community as a whole, which is often an unconsciously produced by-product.[241] While he does not examine social capital exclusively in terms of groups, he was the first author to highlight it as a possible source of benefit for the wider community.

Ostrom is someone whom Putnam also cites as an influence on his work on social capital. She is arguably more rigorous than Coleman in her use of collective action theories as a framework for her version of social capital, and focuses on small communities where collective action (or its absence), and the attendant benefits, can be demonstrated in practice. Like Coleman then, Ostrom uses social capital to address what she views as flaws in existing collective action models. This chapter evaluates each of their work separately, considers how much common ground there is between the two, and finally evaluates whether their work solves any of the problems apparent in Putnam's work on social capital.

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[241] Coleman, J. S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 313 & pp. 315-8.

2.1.) Coleman's work on social capital

Although Coleman did not write a great deal on social capital, he was certainly a keen proponent of the concept. His later work (from the mid 1980s to his death in 1995) generally seeks to address what he sees as shortcomings in social theory (i.e. that it is overly focused on structure) by combining elements of traditional social theory with rational choice theory (which is overly focused on agency). He perceives individuals neither as being purely driven by their own motivations, nor controlled entirely by their social environment.[242] He uses the concept of social capital as one way of linking rational choice theory with social theory. His definition of social capital is broad, and refers to a number of different entities with two common elements:

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure.[243]

There are several elements of this definition that need to be noted. Firstly, that social capital is a *variety* of entities and that, secondly, these entities are defined by their *function*. Thirdly, the definition asserts that social capital facilitates certain actions for actors, which highlights Coleman's attempt to add detail to a central tenet of rational choice theory, the process of the individual making decisions in order to achieve a certain outcome. Lastly, it is important to note that Coleman refers to both individuals and corporate actors, hence social capital has implications beyond the individual for groups and institutions.

Coleman is primarily interested in social capital's role in creating human capital and uses the concept to look at education and the related issue of youth

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[242] Coleman, J. S. 1988. 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* vol 94, pp. S95-S120. p. S118; Coleman, J. S. 1988. 'The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital: Implications for the Law'. *Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy* 3, pp. 375-404. p 375.

[243] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S98.

support in the community. He looks at the latter in the context of the decline of 'primordial' institutions such as the family. He uses several examples to illustrate social capital in action. One case-study examines the link between levels of social capital and high-school drop-out rates. He also offers some abstract models of networks.

This section will first of all examine Coleman's attempt to balance economic and social theories, which provides the foundation for his concept of social capital. Then his version of social capital itself will be considered. His empirical work looking at the relationship between social capital and education will then be reviewed. Finally his concept of social capital will be evaluated in terms of what it can provide Putnam's work.

2.1.1.) Social versus economic theory

Coleman outlines two broad intellectual streams of explanation of social action: the sociological stream and the economic stream. He asserts that the sociological stream sees 'the actor as socialized and action as governed by social norms, rules, and obligations.'[244] He goes on to state that: '[t]he principle virtues of this intellectual stream lie in its ability to describe action in social context and to explain the way action is shaped, constrained, and redirected by the social context.'[245] The economic stream, on the other hand 'sees the actor as having goals independently arrived at, as acting independently, and as wholly self-interested. Its principal virtue lies in having a principle of action, that of maximizing utility.'[246]

Coleman believes that both streams are problematic. Firstly, the sociological stream has what he sees as a fatal flaw because: 'the actor has no "engine of action." The actor is shaped by the environment, but there are no internal springs of action that give the actor a purpose or direction.'[247] He believes that this over-socialised view of the individual is limited as it makes no consideration of the motivations and

[244] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S95.
[245] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S95.
[246] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S95.
[247] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S96.

actions of individuals. On the other hand, the economic stream overstates the role of the individual and Coleman believes it:

> ...flies in the face of empirical reality: persons' actions are shaped, redirected, constrained by the social context; norms, interpersonal trust, social networks, and social organization are important in the functioning not only of the society but also of the economy.[248]

Coleman does not identify any proponents from either view nor does he specify particular theories in each stream such as rational choice theory,[249] rather he is identifying broad tendencies within each theoretical tradition. Generally the sociological stream emphasises structure and the economic stream highlights agency.

Coleman seeks to synthesise the two streams and uses the notion of social capital to assist in this process. His aim is to:

> ...import the economists' principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems proper, including but not limited to economic systems, and to do so without discarding social organization in the process. The concept of social capital is a tool to aid in this.[250]

Coleman is wary of the pitfalls of a crude pastiche of the two streams and seeks to start with the framework of one stream (the economic) and import elements of the other (the sociological): '[i]f we begin with a theory of rational action, in which each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events,

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[248] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S96.

[249] The only references that Coleman provides in this section of his work are Wrong's critique of the sociological stream and Ben-Porath and Williamson's attempts to add a consideration of social organisations to economics. See Wrong, D. 1961. 'The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology', *American Sociological Review* 26, pp. 183-93; Ben-Porath, Y. 1980. 'The *F*-Connection: Families, Friends, and Firms and the Organization of Exchange', *Population and Development Review* 6, pp. 1-30; Williamson, O. 1975. *Markets and Hierarchies.* New York: Free Press; and Williamson, O. 1981. 'The Economics of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach', *American Journal of Sociology* 87, pp. 548-77.

[250] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S97.

then social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor.'[251] Coleman goes on to assert that social capital 'is part of a theoretical strategy that involves use of the paradigm of rational action but without the assumption of atomistic elements stripped of social relationships.'[252] So in essence this is a modified theory of rational choice that takes into account the wider social environment of the individual.

2.1.2.) Coleman's concept of social capital

Coleman believes that there are four types of capital: financial, physical, human and social. He asserts that social capital bears some resemblance to the other types:

> Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible, but is fungible with respect to specific activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others.[253]

Yet there is a key and distinctive difference between social capital and the other forms of capital. It is *relational* and not an individual attribute: '[u]nlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production.'[254] He notes however that because social capital is less tangible than the other types of capital it brings potential measurement problems.

Coleman uses social capital to focus on the aspects of the social structure that help to facilitate actions. He notes how doing this 'blurs distinctions between types of social relations, distinctions that are important for other purposes'.[255] As already

[251] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S98.
[252] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S118.
[253] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 302.
[254] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 302.
[255] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 305.

stated, he defines social capital by its function[256] and he believes that this is a major strength of the concept:

> The value of the concept lies primarily in the fact that it identifies certain aspects of social structure by their function, just as the concept "chair" identifies certain physical objects by their function, disregarding differences in form, appearance, and construction. The function identified by the concept "social capital" is the value of those aspects of social structure to actors, as resources that can be used by the actors to realize their interests.[257]

So the only aspects of the social structure that matter in Coleman's formulation of social capital are those that facilitate action (the function that they are defined as social capital by). Coleman also sees the concept as being very much in its infancy:

> Whether social capital will come to be as useful a quantitative concept in social science as are the concepts of financial capital, physical capital, and human capital remains to be seen; its current value lies primarily in its usefulness for qualitative analyses of social systems and for those quantitative analyses that employ qualitative indicators.[258]

This is a particularly interesting comment because the emphasis has been on social capital mainly as a quantitatively driven concept since the emergence of Putnam's work.

Some authors have criticised Coleman for defining social capital by its function. For example, Portes asserts that this results in causes and consequences being confused: '[d]efining social capital as equivalent with the resources thus obtained is tantamount to saying that the successful succeeded.' Portes also criticises Coleman for including all of the following under the term social capital: some of the mechanisms that generate social capital; the consequences of possession, and the appropriable social organisation that provide the context for the sources and effects

[256] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S98
[257] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 305.
[258] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, pp. 305-6.

to emerge.[259] While the definition undoubtedly helped to lead, as Portes suggests, to the proliferation of processes being labelled social capital (via Putnam), it is not fair to blame Coleman for this. He, unlike Putnam and the multitudes that followed, only uses the concept to examine one aspect of social relations. Separating it from the role it plays in Coleman's broader work is a misuse of his version of the concept. Adopting his work as a starting point is misguided if this is not recognised.

Coleman cites various authors who examine the same field (although not necessarily under the term social capital) such as Bourdieu, Lin, Flap and De Graaf, and Granovetter. It is Loury (whose work was explored in the Introduction to this thesis), however, to whom he credits creating the term social capital.[260] Aside from this precedent, Coleman develops his concept of social capital quite distinctly from the other authors mentioned above, many of whom share common ground in their conceptual approach (and are considered together in Chapter Three). Although some of these authors wrote of social capital before Coleman, he appears not to be directly influenced by them apart from some of their observations on networks. He does not use network analysis in the same level of depth as Lin, nor does he use social capital in the distinct way that Bourdieu does. His own account of networks is much simpler than the network social capital authors, although he does map some closed networks between family members in *Foundations of Social Theory*.[261] It is interesting to note that these networks produce bonding social capital, and he does not consider the equivalent of bridging social capital.

2.1.3.) Forms of social capital

Coleman asserts that there are various types of social capital. He outlines six ways in which social relations 'can constitute useful capital resources for individuals.'[262] These are: obligations and expectations; information potential; norms and effective sanctions; authority relations; appropriable social organisation; and intentional

[259] Portes, A. 1998. 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, pp. 1-24. p. 5.
[260] Coleman briefly discusses his antecedents in Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, pp. 300-03.
[261] See Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, pp. 590-95.
[262] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 306.

organisation. Each of these are briefly examined below along with other appropriate examples of social capital that he uses elsewhere in his work.

2.1.3.1.) Obligations and expectations

A key facet of Coleman's concept is the role of obligations. When a favour is made by one actor to another a role is created for each of them: one actor receives the favour and is then indebted; the other will potentially have the resources reciprocated at a future point, which Coleman refers to as a 'credit slip'.[263] He outlines the implications of this:

> Two elements are critical to this form of social capital: the level of trustworthiness of the social environment, which means that obligations will be repaid, and the actual extent of obligations held. Social structures differ in both of these dimensions, and actors within a particular structure differ in the second.[264]

It is significant that Coleman highlights the role of trust, since – as already discussed in Chapter One – trust is central to the work of Putnam and a lot of other work on social capital. This example also encompasses both economic and social "streams" of thought because a rational actor in this scenario takes into account how trustworthy the social environment is, hence evaluating the likelihood of returns on their investment.

Coleman also outlines the importance of trust elsewhere in his work. In one hypothetical example of social capital he asserts that the trust of patients in their physicians has declined and that this is indicated by the rise in malpractice suits. This has apparently led to an increase in the cost of medical care for certain treatments and in some cases physicians refusing to treat female attorneys or the wives of male attorneys. For Coleman this is symptomatic of a broader social malaise that has negative consequences for some individuals in particular (wrongly sued doctors) and for the collective as a whole:

[263] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 306.
[264] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 306.

> This decline in trust and the increased willingness to file suit against a physician after a medical treatment has had a bad outcome result from a lack of those social relations on which trust depends and lead to increased cost and reduced availability of medical care.[265]

Therefore in Coleman's formulation the breakdown in social relations and trust between doctor and patient are indicative of an absence of social capital.

The Kahn El Khalili market in Cairo is cited by Coleman as an example of obligations in practice. If an enquiry is made to a seller about a product which he does not stock, he will take the enquirer to another seller that does. Sometimes this will earn him a commission, other times it will create an obligation. Coleman believes that this gives these traders social capital: 'the market can be seen as consisting of a set of individual merchants, each having an extensive body of social capital on which to draw, based on the relationships within the market.'[266]

Some individuals have more social capital than others. For example, individuals that give a large amount of aid to other individuals will have accumulated a large number of 'credit slips' and, in Coleman's formulation, have high levels of social capital:

> Individuals in social structures with high levels of obligations outstanding at any time, whatever the source of those obligations, have greater social capital on which they can draw. The density of outstanding obligations means, in effect, that the overall usefulness of the tangible resources possessed by actors in that social structure is amplified by their availability to other actors when needed.[267]

Hierarchical settings, such as family, can result in a few individuals, such as a patriarch, holding a high number of credit slips at any one time.

Coleman considers the role of rational calculation in this process and asserts that agents may sometimes intentionally create an obligation. He concludes that, in the right circumstances, it can be rational to do a 'favour' for someone. It is equally

[265] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 303.
[266] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 304.
[267] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 307.

rational to be wary of receiving such help, and it may be wise if help is accepted for the debtor to try and choose the moment of repayment themselves if possible. A struggle between creditor and debtor may result, where the creditor may try to prevent repayment until the optimal moment for themselves.[268]

2.1.3.2.) Information potential

Coleman believes that information can facilitate action, but can also be costly as it needs individuals to pay attention, something which is always in short supply. Social relations can provide information, even if it is not the specific reason for forming the relationship in the first place. Coleman gives the hypothetical – and slightly whimsical – example of a social scientist who wants to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the field without spending time researching himself, so relies on the everyday contact with his colleagues. This will apparently provide him with a supply of relevant information without great expenditure of effort, as long as his colleagues are themselves keeping abreast of developments and are willing to share their knowledge.[269]

2.1.3.3.) Norms and effective sanctions

Coleman's very first work on social capital is an examination of social norms and he believes that these norms help prevent what would be a Hobbesian free-for-all.[270] He outlines various types of norms. For example, a norm might inhibit crime in a city and make it safer for individuals to walk home at night. He asserts that:

> A prescriptive norm that constitutes an especially important form of social capital within a collectivity is the norm that one should forgo self-interests to act in the interests of the collectivity. A norm of this sort, reinforced by social support, status,

[268] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 309-10.
[269] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 310.
[270] Coleman, J. S. 1987, 'Norms as Social Capital', in Radnitzky, G., and Bernholz, P. (eds) *Economic Imperialism: The Economic Method Applied Outside the Field of Economics.* New York: Paragon House, pp. 133-55. p. 153.

> honor, and other rewards, is the social capital which builds young nations [...] [W]hether supported by internal or external sanctions, norms of this sort are important in overcoming the public-good problem that exists in conjoint collectivities.'[271]

This type of norm, which can help overcome collective action problems, often features in work on social capital, including Putnam's early work.

Coleman emphasises the importance of network closure for these norms to function. There are two reasons why he believes that this is vital: firstly, for norms to emerge, closure is key because there needs to be some kind of continuity or common bond; and secondly closure is needed for trust to reach a certain level. The presence of norms and trust make transactions easier and reciprocation more likely, unlike environments where there is no trust and a greater temptation to free-ride.[272] Closure is needed to make a rational calculation, because the boundary means that there are fewer potential outcomes and the decisions should have a clear foreseeable effect.

Coleman notes that the negative side of norms is that while they might facilitate certain actions, they can also restrain others: '[e]ffective norms in an area can reduce innovativeness in that area, can constrain not only deviant actions that harm others but also deviant actions that can benefit everyone.'[273] Coleman does not examine the implications of this in any great depth.

In his work on social capital Coleman illustrates the importance of norms by twice using an example of a woman who had six children and who moved from suburban Detroit to Jerusalem. She let her children travel to school and play in the park on their own in Jerusalem, but had felt unable to do this in America. The social capital in this case is the norm where the adults look after, or at least look out for, children even if they are not personally known to them: '[i]n Jerusalem the normative structure ensures that unattended children will be looked after by adults in

[271] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 311.
[272] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 318.
[273] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 311.

the vicinity, but no such normative structure exists in most metropolitan areas of the United States.'[274]

Another example of norms offered in his early work on social capital – one that Coleman ceased to use – was of the wholesale diamond market in New York. Diamond merchants leave bags of stones which are of great value with other merchants without any formal insurance of getting the stones back. The lack of cumbersome formal procedures helps the market function more efficiently. In New York the market is a tight-knit community consisting mainly of Jewish families with a great deal of intermarriage. So if one dealer would abscond, he/she would face ostracism from the community.[275] It is unfortunate that Coleman stopped using this example because it is a classic instance of a closed community (a network) with strong ties that uses the threat of potential sanctions, as well as trust, to function without any formal rule system.

2.1.3.4.) Authority relations

In some instances an actor (A) might transfer certain rights to another actor (B). Coleman believes that actor B has social capital in the form of those rights of control. If many actors transfer certain rights of control to actor B, there may be great benefits: 'the very concentration of these rights in a single actor increases the total social capital by overcoming (in principle, if not always entirely in fact) the free-rider problem experienced by individuals with similar interests but without a common authority.'[276] This is a complex form of social capital, and Coleman does not expand upon it in any great detail nor have other authors.

2.1.3.5.) Appropriable social organisation

Coleman uses voluntary organisations as an example of appropriable social organisations. He cites various organisations that were formed for a certain reason

[274] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 303.
[275] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', pp. S98-9.
[276] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 311.

that had a greater legacy. He uses the example of organisations that were established to combat poor housing which created a network that remained useful even after the original objective had been successfully achieved. For instance, the housing reform organisations provided a network of trusted babysitters. Therefore the organisation itself is the social capital in this case. Such a voluntary organisation can have enormous information potential and can help form obligations and expectations, or any of the other forms of social capital outlined in the sections above.[277]

Another example Coleman outlines – based on a newspaper account – is of 'study circles' in South Korea, clandestine groups of students from the same town or church that are used as a basis for demonstrations and protests. Members of different groups never meet, but communicate through a representative. Coleman believes that this illustrates two types of social capital. Firstly, being from the same church or town is indicative of social relations on which the circles are built. Secondly, the circles themselves are social capital, a cellular form of organisation which can help to facilitate dissent: '[a]ny organization which makes possible such oppositional activities is an especially potent form of social capital for the individuals who are members of the organization.'[278]

2.1.3.6.) Intentional organisation

While, according to Coleman, most social capital is a by-product of other activities, there can also be direct investment in it too. He gives a hypothetical example of a new company being set up which not only invests in human and physical capital, but also invests in social capital in the form of the organisation of positions: 'social capital requires investment in the designing of the structure of obligations and expectations, responsibility and authority, and norms (or rules) and sanctions which will bring about an effectively functioning organization.'[279]

He also returns to the example of voluntary organisations which in certain instances can create a public good: 'its [social capital] creation by one subset of

[277] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 312.
[278] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 303.
[279] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 313.

persons makes its benefits available to others as well, whether or not they participate.'[280] He uses the example of a Parent Teacher Association, which not only benefits the parents involved (and their children) but will also benefit all of the parents and pupils in the school.

Social capital's public good consequence is an important part of Coleman's concept that later social capital authors, most notably Putnam, would emphasise. This outcome means that it differs greatly from other types of capital. Coleman considers the implications of this unique element in detail. Whereas there are incentives to invest in physical capital and some types of human capital (i.e. education) for the investor, social capital is different. This is because the investment does not necessarily benefit the individual directly:

> ...the kinds of social structures which make possible social norms and the sanctions to enforce them do not benefit primarily the persons whose efforts are necessary to bring the norms and sanctions into existence, but all those who are part of the particular structure.[281]

Individuals therefore may not be overly keen to create it, despite the fact that they may eventually benefit:

> ...because many of the benefits of actions that bring social capital into being are experienced by persons other that the person so acting, it is not in that person's interest to bring it into being. The result is that most forms of social capital are created or destroyed as a by-product of other activities. Much social capital arises or disappears without anyone's willing it into or out of being; such capital is therefore even less recognized and taken into account in social research than its intangible character might warrant.[282]

Thus it may not appear to be a rational decision to invest in social capital. Coleman frames this in the context of costs and benefits. He uses a hypothetical example of a

[280] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 313.
[281] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 316.
[282] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, pp. 317-8.

mother who does not work full-time and puts a great deal of effort into voluntary activities at the local school. If she decides to take a full-time job it would make sense financially for her household, because there would be monetary gain and this may outweigh the personal benefits gained from the voluntary activities. Yet other parents will lose out because of the cessation of her activities, especially those whose associations and contacts are dependent upon them.[283]

Coleman warns that underinvestment in social capital can occur in other ways. As was demonstrated earlier, the act of a favour benefits the creditor as well as the debtor. Yet this might be bypassed if there is some external help (such as from a government agency), which means that someone might benefit without incurring an obligation.[284] This means that the social capital in the community has not been added to or used, something that Ostrom alleges happens in many development projects with apparently disastrous consequences (which will be explored later in this chapter).

The importance of investment can also apply to information to a certain extent. Coleman believes that most agents obtain information for their own benefit initially before passing it onto others (a classic example of social capital as a by-product). Yet this can bring them benefits as well. Status can be conferred on some 'opinion leaders' who receive deference and gratitude for their information.[285]

Ostrom and Ahn assert that in highlighting the public-good outcome, Coleman precipitated the key change in the scope of the concept of social capital by expanding the analysis to look at larger groups (i.e. regions and nations). This would feature in the work of Putnam, and in Ostrom's own work to a lesser extent. They therefore credit Coleman with what they consider to be a positive expansion of the concept even though he did not examine it at this level in any great detail.[286]

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[283] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 316.
[284] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 317.
[285] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 317.
[286] See Ostrom, E., and Ahn, T. K. 2002. 'A Social Science Perspective on Social Capital: Social Capital and Collective Action', *Rusel Papers – Civic Series* 1, pp. 8-56. pp. 13-14.

2.1.3.7.) Summarising the different forms of social capital

The diversity of the above examples illustrate how Coleman perceives social capital as constituting many different things, the common factor being their function (i.e. facilitating successful action). In some ways Coleman's definition is even broader than Putnam's, who generally narrowed it down to three elements: networks, norms and trust. All of the examples above outline how some assistance or resource is used for cooperation or an achievement of a certain goal.

Coleman does not explore the role of social capital in great detail in these examples and admits that the concept is not used in all parts of his broader work on social theory.[287] This is in keeping with social capital's role in his work. He asserts that these examples indicate that 'social organization constitutes social capital, facilitating the achievement of goals that could not be achieved in its absence or could be achieved only at a higher cost.'[288] Therefore social capital is something – or various things – that reduce transaction costs.

2.1.4.) Empirical evidence: Two case-studies

Coleman uses various instances – some actual, some hypothetical – of social capital in practice when outlining the concept. He demonstrates correlations between social capital and various outcomes in his empirical work. This has been used as a template for other writers' quantitative work on social capital, most famously Putnam's.

Coleman only offers two detailed case-studies that feature social capital. One is a qualitative historical account of the decline of primordial institutions such as the family. He argues that this decline, and the accompanying loss of social capital, has led to dire consequences, such as a lack of a support structure for young people. This is further explored in his other major case-study, a quantitative examination of the relationship between social capital and high-school drop-out rates. They are both on a larger scale than the micro-examples used to outline his concept.

[287] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 306.
[288] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 304.

2.1.4.1.) The decline of primordial institutions

Coleman outlines the decline of primordial institutions, such as the family. He asserts that a great social revolution came with the French and industrial revolutions. This saw a change from what he refers to as 'primordial social organization' to 'purposively constructed social organization.'[289] Primordial ties are developed through the social relations of blood ties, the elementary unit being the family: 'in nearly every society before these two revolutions, the social structure grew outward from this elementary unit, and economic production took place in and around it.'[290] In the thirteenth century new corporate actors came into being that were independent of primordial ties. These 'fictitious persons' – trading companies, modern corporations, voluntary organisations – were recognised in law. These were purposively constructed and not based in the family.

In the period since the industrial revolution, there has been a decline in primordial institutions. This is because there are now dramatically less men in agriculture, more women working and more children at school, which all 'indicate a massive movement out of the household, a primordial institution with diffuse and multiple functions, into narrow-purpose constructed organizations, the workplace and the school.'[291] One of the key elements of this shift is that in purposively constructed organizations the emphasis is on positions not persons: individuals are just temporary occupants of positions.

The modern corporation, in Coleman's view, is representative of the type of corporate actor that replaced the family as the central social unit of society, and is where men and women now find their psychological home.[292] While these groups maximise their internal welfare, they have no responsibility for the needy outside of it, such as the old, the young, the handicapped, those with learning difficulties, the insane, the unmarried or the invalid.[293] Coleman is particularly interested in the fate

[289] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 2.
[290] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 2.
[291] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 7.
[292] Coleman, 'The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital', p. 397.
[293] Coleman, 'The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital', p. 397.

of the young. They face new disadvantages, even if they come from families blessed with financial capital:

> ...the capacity of the state to take financial responsibility for these dependent persons is not matched by the social capital necessary to implement this responsibility. In particular, the withering away of the family as the principal agent for the socialization of children is not paralleled by the growth of another institution with the incentive to make investments that aid the growth and development of children.[294]

Coleman believes that instead the young find interests in themselves, which can be counter-productive, the most extreme examples of which being gang and drug cultures.

The modern compartmentalisation of life means that social capital cannot function in the same way as it did in the closed networks of the primordial institutions. For Coleman, the existence of norms, reputation, and status in informal social systems depend on two factors: Firstly that some in the group have the power to impose a positive or negative externality to make it in the interest of the whole group to control actions; and secondly, that there is 'sufficient social capital to allow appropriate collusion and sharing of the cost of sanctions'.[295] It is the second of these that Coleman believes is no longer being met in society. Technological changes have expanded social circles and destroyed the geographical constraints on social relations:

> "Communities" of adults do form, not around physical places, but around common interests. Yet because these communities encompass only one aspect of their members' lives, they lack, except in that one domain, the coercive power on which the effectiveness of norms, status, and reputation depend.[296]

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[294] Coleman, 'The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital', p. 398.
[295] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 9.
[296] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 9.

This again demonstrates just how significant closed networks are to Coleman's conception of social capital. He believes that there needs to be a rigid and embracing structure in order to bring wider benefits. Yet Coleman does go on to highlight the negative side of these types of communities: '[t]hey operate more via constraints and coercion than via incentives and rewards. They are inegalitarian, giving those with most power in the community freedoms that are denied others.'[297] Instead of returning to mystical 'golden age' therefore, Coleman believes that new institutions should be built in order to create social capital. One example is to provide positive incentives for children to attend school and achieve good results (relative to their own levels) instead of punitive measures for poor attendance and academic underachievement.[298] This is an example of Coleman outlining an initiative to build social capital. Yet he does not look in detail at how the "new" communities would bring their own, different, benefits.

2.1.4.2.) Coleman's example of social capital's effect on youth

Coleman's initial work on social capital focuses on education. Contained in this is his only major quantitative study of social capital. He was interested in the reason for the variation in drop-out rates between different types of schools. He linked this to the decline of primordial social institutions, especially the family, which was outlined above. He examines the pre-graduation dropout rate in American schools. He takes into account various factors, including the religion of the school. He uses five measures of intensity of parent-child relations, which he refers to as: 'indicators of social capital in the home'.[299] The five measures are:

[297] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', p. 10.
[298] Coleman, 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society', pp. 12-14.
[299] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 595.

1) The presence of both parents in the household
2) Number of siblings
3) Parents and children talking about personal matters
4) Mothers working outside the home before their child is in school
5) Parents' interest in the child attending college

The data Coleman uses has a sample of 28,000 students from 1,015 high schools in 1980. Two years later it was checked to see whether the students had remained in school. Coleman's results are compelling, and are reproduced below:

Table 2.1.) Effects of various measures of social capital provided by the parent-child relations on estimated percentage of students dropping out (grades 10 to 12)[300]

Measure	**Percentage dropping out**	**Difference in percentages**
1) *Parents' presence*		
Two parents	13.1%	6%
Single parent	19.1%	
2) *Additional children in family*		
One sibling	10.8%	6.4%
Four siblings	17.2%	
3) *Ratio of parents to children*		
Two parents, one sibling	10.1%	12.5%
One parent, four siblings	22.6%	
4) *Mother's expectation for child's education*		
Expectation of college	11.6%	8.6%
No expectation of college	20.2%	
5) *All measures combined*		
Two parents, one sibling, mother expects college	8.1%	22.5%
One parent, four siblings, no expectation of college	30.6%	

[300] Table adapted from Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 596.

Coleman also uses a measure later considered by Putnam in *Bowling Alone*,[301] that of residential stability:

Table 2.2.) Effect of residential stability in providing social capital on estimated percentage of students dropping out[302]

Number of moves since fifth grade	Estimated percentage dropping out	Difference in percentages
No moves	12.6%	7.4%
Two moves	20.0%	

In addition, Coleman looks at drop-out rates by different types of schools:

Table 2.3.) Dropout rates for students from schools with differing amounts of social capital in the surrounding community[303]

Dropout rates	Public	Catholic	Other Private schools
Raw dropout rates	14.4%	3.4%	11.9%
Dropout rates standardised to average public school sophomore	14.4%	5.2%	11.6%

In Table 2.1 there is certainly a noticeable difference in each measure. Table 2.2 also indicates that residential stability aids the retention of students. The third, Table 2.3, shows that Catholic private schools have a considerably lower dropout compared to other private schools, and even more so compared to public schools, even when results are standardised to the average student body. Coleman attributes this to the close bonds in the Catholic church. The frequency of attendance at religious services is strongly related to dropout rate (those with a higher attendance rate are less likely

[301] Putnam looked at it in the chapter "Mobility and Sprawl". See Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon & Schuster. p. 205.
[302] Table adapted from Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 597.
[303] Adapted from Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S115.

to dropout) and for Coleman this is a measure of social capital through intergenerational closure.[304]

It should be noted that the data presentation is selective, for example in the first table only the data for one and four siblings are presented, and not all of the permutations in-between. However, it is certainly apparent that family background has an affect on drop-out rates.

Coleman implies that other variables such as social class and ethnicity are taken into account, but the detail is not presented. He also does not triangulate the data with his qualitative work, which would enrich it. For example, in a separate qualitative example, Coleman writes of children from Asian immigrant families ordering two copies of the same textbook. After further investigation it was discovered that the second copy was for the mother to read in order to help the child with their school work.[305] This is a tangible example of the potentially positive effect of *active* parental involvement.

2.1.4.3.) Evaluation of the case-studies

Coleman's case-studies on social capital are brief but are not without merit. He outlined the decline of primordial institutions, which highlights the dynamics of social change since the industrial revolution. Yet similarly to Putnam's history of Italy, Coleman devotes too little space in his account to such a long and eventful period of history. The case-study of high school drop-out rates is a compelling study in itself and can be used as a way of confirming that strong networks (for example the family and the Catholic church) can improve outcomes, in this case high school drop-out rates.

[304] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', pp. S114-5
[305] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 591.

2.1.5.) What Coleman's work can offer Putnam's concept of social capital

Coleman's work on social capital has been extremely influential on many authors, including Putnam. He presents the concept as just one part of his broader social theory, something that looks at one aspect of social relations, and not as something that should be considered on its own. How Coleman's work addresses the six issues raised by Putnam's work is explored below, and a full evaluation of his work appears at the end of the chapter.

2.1.5.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

Coleman seeks to combine parts of economic and social theory in his work. It must be emphasised that he only ever used social capital to look at one aspect of social relations as part of his broader theory. In *Foundations of Social Theory* he explores the concept mainly in one chapter and states that in other chapters 'the concept of social capital will be left unanalyzed'[306] and notes that the 'concept of social capital will uncover no processes that are different in fundamental ways' from those examined elsewhere in his work.[307]

Coleman also states, as already noted, that the concept 'groups some of those processes together and blurs distinctions between types of social relations, distinctions that are important for other purposes.'[308] This 'blur' in the concept is indicative of his desire to look at one aspect of social relations, one which is difficult to quantify. It is important to note that Coleman states that social capital identifies the function of certain elements of the social structure 'without elaborating the social-structural details through which this occurs.'[309] It provides this important insight by 'showing how such resources can be combined with other resources to produce different system-level behaviour or, in other cases, different outcomes for

[306] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 306.
[307] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 304.
[308] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 305
[309] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 305.

individuals.'[310] So while it is a generalising concept in many respects, Coleman believes that this is necessary for it to provide its insight. Sandefur and Laumann, while commending Coleman for illustrating the utility of social capital, assert that this could be further developed:

> ...this tack, by glossing the 'social-structural details', forgoes systematic analysis of the mechanisms through which social capital has its effects. Examination of these mechanisms gives insight into the workings of social capital, and suggests ways in which its multitude of forms can be fruitfully and parsimoniously differentiated.[311]

Yet those seeking to appropriate Coleman's concept of social capital are unwise to do so without considering it as part of his broader work because he did not mean for the concept to be used independently. This is where Putnam's adoption of Coleman's definition is particularly ill-advised because he does not fully consider the context in which Coleman deployed the concept. Coleman's own broader framework, however, is successfully realised.

2.1.5.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

Coleman examines social capital in relation to both individuals and small groups. His most influential work, however, focuses on the latter. Coleman cites social organisation as the most common form of social capital, whether formal or informal. It is important to note that he does not tie this entirely to voluntary associations – the form of social structures so highly valued by Putnam.

Coleman asserts that social capital differs from the previous notion of social organisation because it highlights the value of social organisation in *achieving goals*, especially public goods '[o]ne of the principle ways this value arises is through

[310] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 305.
[311] Sandefur, R. L. and Laumann, E. O. 1998. 'A Paradigm for Social Capital', *Rationality and Society* 10 (4), pp. 481-501. p. 483.

facilitating the provision of public goods; that is, goods which are not in the interest of any individual to produce alone, but which, if provided, are of benefit to many.'[312]

Coleman does on occasion examine large-scale events – for example the industrial revolution – and considers social capital's role in this,[313] but on the whole he studies small-scale examples and implies that the findings may be generalised and applied to similar sized groups and networks. For Coleman social capital is something that essentially facilitates action for individuals and small groups. He is credited by Ostrom and Ahn as the first to highlight the public good outcome of social capital opposed to concentrating just on the individual benefits. This has become central to social capital's appeal.

2.1.5.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

While structure and agency are important in Putnam's work, Coleman's adoption of social capital is explicitly used in an attempt to combine considerations of both. It could be argued that Coleman fails to join the economic and sociological streams with total success. His work featuring social capital on occasion exhibits the kind of crude pastiche of different theories that he himself warns against.[314] He often switches between the two streams without ever truly integrating them in any given instance. For example, his outlines of various scenarios facing individuals in *Foundations of Social Theory* are very much rooted in the economic stream.[315] Tilly asserts that Coleman has a distinct bias, especially in his abstract examples: '[a]lthough his verbal accounts mention many agents, monitors, and authorities who influenced individual actions, his mathematical formulations tellingly portrayed a single actor's computations rather than interactions among persons.'[316] Yet, on the other hand, his work on the decline of primordial institutions focuses almost entirely on the sociological stream as it concentrates on how structures have changed.

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[312] Coleman, 'The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital', p. 392.
[313] Coleman, J. S. 1993. 'The Rational Reconstruction of Society: 1992 Presidential Address', *American Sociological Review* 58, pp. 1-15. pp. 9-10.
[314] See Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S97.
[315] For example, see Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, pp. 742-5.
[316] Tilly, C. 1998. *Durable Inequality.* California: University of California Press. p. 19.

2.1.5.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

Coleman defines social capital by its function and highlights instances of cooperation which are beneficial to individuals and groups. However, he also emphasises that social capital is not fungible. What may be a valuable form of social capital in one instance 'may be useless or even harmful for others.'[317] Therefore he believes that there can be negative outcomes from social capital as well as positive ones. He notes that people can be excluded from groups and collective action can be used against other individuals or groups.

2.1.5.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

Coleman does not explicitly look at weak ties in same way that Putnam or the Network authors do. While he cites Granovetter's attack on the 'undersocialized concept of man' in most economists work,[318] he does not reference his material on weak ties. Coleman does briefly mention Lin's early work on weak ties, but he states that he wants to concentrate on a variety of resources that constitute social capital.[319]

Coleman focuses on strong ties in the form of cooperation within dense networks and is interested in how such dense networks can benefit their members.[320] He believes that density is needed to produce cooperation, for example through a recognised norm of reciprocity in the network.

[317] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 302.
[318] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S97.
[319] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', p. S102.
[320] Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', pp. 105-8.

2.1.5.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

One of Coleman's most notable contributions to debates on social capital is highlighting that it is often a by-product of other activities. He asserts that social capital is often destroyed because the person producing it does not receive all of the benefits and others enjoy the outcomes (the public good dimension of social capital). By highlighting this Coleman is particularly influential on Putnam.

Coleman also believes that there can be investment in social capital by intentional organisation in some circumstances and that new structures can be created to replace disappearing primordial institutions, although he does not specify what these might be in any great detail.

2.1.5.7.) Does this version of social capital provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

As a major influence on Putnam's own version of social capital, some of Coleman's work is already utilised by Putnam, albeit in a distorted form. In fact, the depth of the impact of Coleman's work on Putnam is often overlooked. For example, Coleman's notion of declining social capital – which he specifically places within a framework of declining primordial institutions – and the case for renewal foreshadows Putnam's American work. Putnam broadens this and makes a case for arresting and countering civic decline. Yet whereas Coleman saw the decline in social capital as happening since the industrial revolution, Putnam believed that the current malaise had occurred mainly in the last thirty years, although the levels of social capital have fluctuated. It is significant that both authors have stated that the decline of tightly-knit communities should not necessarily be mourned and that new, better, institutions should be created which can produce fresh types of social capital.

Unlike Putnam, Coleman mainly looks at the micro-level. His work explicitly attempts to combine considerations of structure and agency. He notes that social capital can have negative consequences as well being virtuous. Coleman

emphasises how social capital is often the by-product of other activities and can be destroyed unintentionally because of this. One of the key contrasts to Putnam is that Coleman does not look at weak ties. This is not a deficiency in his work, just a difference in focus. Yet this is unfortunate as weak ties are central to Putnam's later, more conceptually fruitful, work.

The main lesson that Coleman's version offers Putnam is that conceptually it is only one part of a larger social theory. Whereas Putnam fails to consistently contextualise the concept in a broader conceptual framework, Coleman is clear that it is used only to look at one aspect of social relations. As will be further discussed in Chapter Four, social capital is utilised by many authors within larger conceptual considerations.

2.2.) Ostrom's work on social capital

The author who has used the concept of social capital most overtly and consistently in the context of collective action dilemmas is Elinor Ostrom. She has written extensively on contemporary development issues and has related these studies to theoretical concepts examining collective action dilemmas, such as the tragedy of the commons. Ostrom emphasises the importance of this approach: 'the theory of collective action is *the* central subject of political science. It is the core of the justification for the state.'[321]

Ostrom believes the problem in development programmes is often that there is too great an emphasis on physical capital. She asserts that financial resources alone have not proved sufficient and many projects have failed despite fiscal investment.[322] She believes that this has been because social capital has not been understood or even considered and this is something she seeks to rectify. Ostrom defines social capital as 'the shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules and expectations about patterns of interactions that groups of individuals bring to a recurrent activity'.[323]

This section will explore her approach to collective action dilemmas generally before focusing on her work on social capital.

2.2.1.) Second generation collective action theories

Ostrom outlines three main models of collective action: the tragedy of the commons, the prisoner's dilemma, and the logic of collective action. She asserts that the free rider problem is at the heart of all three and that there are 'closely related concepts in the models that have defined the accepted way of viewing many problems that

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[321] Ostrom, E. 1998. 'A Behavioural Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action', *American Political Science Review* 92 (1), pp. 1-22. p. 1.
[322] Ostrom, E. 2000. 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', in Dasgupta, P., and Serageldin, I. *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective.* Washington, D. C.: The World Bank, pp. 172-214. pp. 172-3.
[323] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 176.

individuals face when attempting to achieve collective benefits.'[324] As with Coleman, Ostrom is interested in collective action models while believing that there are deficiencies in the original theories. Yet unlike Coleman she does not attempt to unify the approach with the "sociological stream", rather she seeks to make more minor adjustments. She asserts that a behavioural theory of collective action has not yet been developed that is consistent 'with empirical evidence about how individuals make decisions in social-dilemma situations.'[325] She goes on to state that first-generation models of collective action 'concluded that individuals could not achieve joint benefits when left by themselves if everyone would be benefited whether or not they contributed to the effort.'[326] Ostrom feels that this is a major flaw and highlights the need for other considerations:

> At the core of the first-generation theories of collective action is an image of atomized, selfish, and fully rational individuals. In reality, individuals do not live in an atomized world. Many collective-action problems are embedded in pre-existing networks, organizations, or other ongoing relationships among individuals.[327]

Again this is similar to Coleman's concern that the view of the atomised individual faced with a set of decisions is insufficient and that in reality they operate in a broader social context.

Ostrom and Ahn identify a second-generation of collective action theories and assert that they acknowledge various types of individuals, as opposed to the first generation theories that presupposed universal selfishness. The second-generation theories also use behavioural and evolutionary game theories, which look at broader issues: 'one of the main concerns of behavioural game theory is the problem of social motivations, which has a direct implication to the discussion of trust and trustworthiness in social capital research.'[328]

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[324] Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 6.
[325] Ostrom, E. 'A Behavioural Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action', p. 1.
[326] Ostrom and Ahn, 'A Social Science Perspective on Social Capital', p. 26.
[327] Ostrom and Ahn, 'A Social Science Perspective on Social Capital', p. 26.
[328] Ostrom and Ahn, 'A Social Science Perspective on Social Capital', p. 27.

2.2.2.) Ostrom's conception of capital

Ostrom's identifies four types of capital. One is natural capital and the other three are human made: physical, human, and social capital. This is a different grouping to other social capital authors because of the inclusion of natural capital. The first three types are examined below and social capital is studied in more depth in the next section.

Natural capital is an important type of capital which 'encompasses the rich array of biophysical resource systems that are the ultimate source and storehouse of all human productivity'.[329] The biggest issue for this type of capital is that it needs to be used in a sustainable manner and not exhausted for short-term gain.

Ostrom classifies physical, human, and social capital as human-made capital, which she generically defines as being 'created by spending time and effort in transformation and transaction activities in order to build tools or assets today that increase income in the future.'[330] Ostrom warns against equating such capital simply with money, and asserts that human-made capital can be developed with little or no money if time and energy is used appropriately. The other common features of human-made capital are that it: 'involves creating new opportunities as well as exercising restraints, a risk that the investment might fail, and the possibility of using capital to produce harms rather than benefits.'[331] All types of human-made capital therefore can create some opportunities and restrict others, and they also all have potentially negative outcomes because they can be put to harmful uses as well as positive ones.[332]

Ostrom perhaps emphasises the importance of physical capital more than other social capital authors. She notes that it can exist in a variety of forms such as machinery and roads, and that '[t]he origin of physical capital is the process of spending time and other resources constructing tools, plants, facilities, and other material resources that can, in turn, be used in producing other products or future

[329] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 173.
[330] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 174.
[331] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 174.
[332] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 198.

income.'[333] She asserts that physical capital cannot operate over time without human capital in the form of knowledge and skills and that it cannot be used by more than one individual constructively without social capital. In contrast to human and social capital – which may both be developed as a by-product of other activities as well as being created for its own sake – investments in physical capital are usually a conscious act.

Human capital is defined by Ostrom as the knowledge and skills of an individual that they can bring to an activity. These skills may vary greatly in both form and value:

> Forms of human capital also differ among themselves. A college education is a different type of human capital than the skills of a cabinetmaker acquired through apprenticeship training. Human capital is formed consciously through education and training and unconsciously through experience.[334]

Human capital can therefore be developed unconsciously as well as consciously. Ostrom uses the example of swimming for pleasure – which has the by-product of improving health – as an instance where human capital might be developed unconsciously.

2.2.3.) Social capital

Social capital is the third type of human-made capital. As already noted, Ostrom defines it as shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules, and expectations which aid collective action.[335] While physical and human capital are useful for collective activity, high levels of social capital are vital in order to utilise them optimally:

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[333] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 174.
[334] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 175.
[335] Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, p. 6.

> In the establishment of any coordinated activity, participants accomplish far more per unit of time devoted to a joint activity if they draw on capital resources to reduce the level of current inputs needed to produce a joint outcome. They are more productive with whatever physical and human capital they draw on, if they agree on the way that they will coordinate activities and credibly commit themselves to a sequence of future actions.[336]

So for Ostrom, while other types of capital can benefit the collective as well as individuals, it is social capital that maximises *group* outcomes.

Ostrom outlines three other important points about her concept of social capital: that it is formed over time and is embedded in common understanding rather than obvious physical structures; that common understanding is difficult to articulate in language; and that common understanding is eroded if large numbers of people are involved or if a large number of the participants leave quickly.[337] Ostrom's work is important as it explores group-level social capital more forensically than other authors.

2.2.3.1.) Forms of social capital

Ostrom outlines various forms of social capital – the four main variants are explored below – and asserts that they are very much similar.

2.2.3.1.1.) Family structure

Ostrom cites the work of Bates that summaries research that looks at different lineages in Kenya and Mali, and also examines East African pastoralists.[338] Some of these families create different property types and access to future income. This is not a form of social capital that Ostrom herself explores in any depth other than pointing

[336] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 176.
[337] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 179.
[338] Bates, R. H. 1990. 'Capital, Kinship, and Conflict: The Structuring of Capital in Kinship Societies', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24 (2), pp. 151-64. Quoted in Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 177.

out that extended lineages incur costs but also bring benefits 'by spreading risk in those environments where ecological or economic variation is very high.'[339] In a western context Bourdieu looked at family structure in relation to cultural capital (see Chapter Three).

2.2.3.1.2.) Shared Norms

In a similar vein to Coleman, Ostrom notes the importance of norms, but she emphasises that while these shared norms are forms of social capital, different norms have different consequences. For example, the norm of reciprocity 'implies some level of symmetry among those who engage in long-term reciprocal relationships.'[340] This is a classic case of social capital being a by-product of other activities: 'investments made in one time period in building trust and reciprocity can produce higher levels of return in future time periods even though the individuals creating trust and reciprocity are not fully conscious of the social capital they construct.'[341] Yet there are also norms based on asymmetric relationships. Deference to elders and authority figures are examples of this. While these may potentially lead to future returns, they can also lead to stagnation. Other norms, such as the norm of retribution, are totally destructive and any positive outcomes are achieved only by coercion.

2.2.3.1.3.) Conventions

Conventions can be established without the effort and time that it takes to create more formal rules and processes. An action or decision that is successful provides a precedent for successful cooperation in the future:

> If mutual expectations based on past behaviour are fulfilled again and again, the precedent becomes a convention for how activities, costs, and benefits will be

[339] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 177.
[340] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 177.
[341] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 177.

> handled by individuals in the future. The convention has economic value because transaction costs are much lower when most participants already have agreed that a particular convention is appropriate and positive gains can be achieved with a low risk of breakdown[342]

Successful conventions are those that have been developed in the past and are deeply embedded in the activities of a collective. Yet Ostrom believes that the drawback to such conventions is that there is a greater temptation to cheat or default than in more formalised rule systems with sanctions against transgressors.

2.2.3.1.4.) Rule systems

The temptation to cheat and free-load are great in various collective action ventures without 'more self-consciously developed agreements, monitoring arrangements, and methods for imposing sanctions on nonconformance.'[343] Ostrom asserts that this indicates a need for rigid rule-systems:

> To create social capital in a self-conscious manner, individuals must spend time and energy working with one another to craft institutions – that is, sets of rules that will be used to allocate the benefits derived from an organized activity and to assign responsibility for paying costs[344]

Rules indicate possible asymmetric relationships and potential sanctions from formal bodies. Yet rules-in-use can also be created by self-organized governance systems. These systems 'create their own rules in millions of disparate local settings to cope with a variety of private and public problems.'[345]

[342] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', pp. 177-8.
[343] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 178.
[344] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 178.
[345] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 178.

2.2.4.) The differences between social and physical capital

Whereas Coleman emphasises the relationship between human and social capital, Ostrom focuses on the relationship between physical and social capital. This is because her central hypothesis is that development projects need greater consideration of social capital as opposed to an over-reliance on physical capital. To a certain extent she concentrates on physical and social capital in her work at the expense of human and natural capital, but she does note that all four are essential for development.[346]

Ostrom outlines how the diverse types of social capital have the following shared characteristics which are dissimilar to physical capital: social capital does not wear out with use but rather with disuse; it is not easy to see and measure; it is hard to construct through external interventions; and national and regional governmental institutions strongly affect the level and type of social capital available to individuals to pursue long-term development efforts.[347] These differences are explored below because it is in this context that Ostrom chooses to develop her concept of social capital, and it is where much of the detail about her version of the concept emerges.

Ostrom believes that social capital can improve with time if participants keep commitments and maintain reciprocity and trust. This is in contrast to physical capital which tends to wear out with use. While believing that groups of people working together is the key to further successful collective action, Ostrom, like Coleman, asserts that the fungibility of social capital is limited and is not useful for all tasks. Social capital is therefore not something that can be used in the same manner in all situations:

> Social capital that is well adapted to one broad set of joint activities may not be easily molded to activities that require vastly different patterns of expectation, authority, and distribution of rewards and costs than used in the initial sets of activities.[348]

[346] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 173.
[347] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 179.
[348] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 180.

Ostrom asserts not only that social capital is not infinitely adaptable, but that it also needs to be constantly used to be maintained. This is similar to individuals who do not exercise their skills losing their human capital. If a collective has a high turnover of personnel then social capital dissipates if newcomers are not properly initiated into the established pattern of interaction.[349]

While the outcomes of social capital are tangible and measurable for Ostrom, the processes themselves are not. Whereas physical capital is easy to see, for example health centres, schools, and roads; social capital is almost invisible 'unless serious efforts are made to inquire about the ways in which individuals organize themselves and the rights and duties that guide their behaviour – sometimes with little conscious thought.'[350] Ostrom believes it is important that instances of common understanding must be observed and understood. This may entail a qualitative study of traditions and how cooperation occurs in the community, and quantitative data that can indicate instances of successful collaboration (which is a measurable outcome of social capital). Ostrom does this with only limited success herself, as will be discussed below.

Ostrom emphasises the importance of local knowledge when building social capital. This is in marked contrast to physical capital, where an investment from an external agency is more transparent and straight-forward. There are also different types of interventions e.g. from private and public enterprises. It is in the interest of private enterprise to create social capital in order to increase profits and make the business venture function optimally. Public entrepreneurs (e.g. public officials) need to consider the wider group, but Ostrom warns that a bureaucracy may spawn a self-serving clique that does not actually aid the collective as a whole.

Following on from the previous point, Ostrom believes that governmental intervention can help or hinder social capital depending on various factors:

> They facilitate the creation of social capital when considerable space for self-organization is authorized outside of the realm of required governmental action. However, when national or regional governments take over full responsibilities for

[349] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 180.
[350] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 180.

large realms of human activities, they crowd out other efforts to enter these fields.[351]

Ostrom concludes that '[c]reating dependent citizens rather than entrepreneurial citizens reduces the capacity of individuals to generate capital.'[352] She asserts that a great deal of social capital is not produced by public bureaucrats or private entrepreneurs, but by those who are the beneficiaries of collaboration, for example those whose day-to-day activities are directly affected by the project. It is these groups that Ostrom tends to focus on and this is a key dimension of her work. In her view individuals must have incentives to participate and any kind of external intervention can suppress cooperation if it donates finances without the need for participants to contribute.

2.2.4.1.) Summary of the differences between physical and social capital

Ostrom asserts that many of the differences between physical and social capital are due to the great effort needed to create and maintain the latter and 'the importance of shared cognitive understandings that are essential for social capital to exist and to be transmitted from one generation to another.'[353] The differences are particularly important in terms of development policy because existing social capital can be harnessed by external agencies, although it is difficult to construct from scratch. This means that any project has to involve the local population and existing networks. Ostrom is very much against external interventions – even philanthropist enterprises – if the beneficiaries of the scheme have no input into it. This is because they will have no motivation for active involvement and there is a possibility that they will free-ride.

[351] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 182.
[352] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 182.
[353] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 179.

2.2.5.) Empirical evidence: A case-study of irrigation projects

Ostrom's main case-studies look at various projects that entail collective action in less developed countries.[354] She most frequently studies irrigation projects in her work on social capital, paying particular attention to the role of institutions,[355] and develops a game-theoretic analysis of decisions facing the individuals or groups of individuals involved. She does not use quantitative indicators of social capital like Putnam or (to a lesser extent) Coleman. She considers her detailed qualitative studies in a broader political and economic context, which does include some quantitative data, but she does not examine such factors for the small communities that she studies.

Ostrom focuses on how farmers bargain over rules in irrigation schemes. For a scheme to succeed in the first instance farmers need land tenure and 'a sufficient sense of community that they can engage in a full array of face-to-face relationships that value keeping promises an asset of considerable importance.'[356] Ostrom then produces all of the possible theoretical scenarios of actor participation in the scheme, noting which would bring the best results to the greatest number of participants. Then she provides data on irrigation schemes in practice in Nepal from Lam's study[357] that is consistent with her theoretical model and finds that 'farmer-governed irrigation systems are able to achieve better and more equitable outcomes than those managed by a national agency.'[358] Ostrom concludes from Lam's data that performance was often better when irrigation systems were built by the farmers themselves, even when more technologically simple, than in more technologically advanced systems built by external agencies with no local involvement. Ostrom utilises some of Lam's data on the average number of labour days per individual as an indicator of the level of participation needed for the scheme to succeed. This

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[354] See Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*; Ostrom, E. 1992. *Crafting Institutions for Self-Governing Irrigation Systems.* San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press; Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?'.
[355] See Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, pp. 18-39.
[356] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 183.
[357] Ostrom uses data from Lam, W. F. 1998. *Governing Irrigation Systems in Nepal: Institutions, Infrastructure, and Collective Action.* Oakland: ICS Press.
[358] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 192.

leads Ostrom to conclude that motivations and the involvement of farmers are far more important than physical capital and expertise from external agencies when they take no account of the participants: '[t]he incentives of farmers, villagers, and officials are more important in determining performance than the engineering of physical systems.'[359] She asserts that schemes which do not utilise local knowledge and bypass existing structures fail because those benefiting from the scheme are not directly investing in it:

> When farmers select and *reward* their own officials to govern and manage an irrigation system that they own and operate, the incentives faced by these officials are closely aligned with the incentives of other farmers in the system. System performance is linked to the evaluation made of the performance of the officials. In many centralized, national government systems, no such linkage is present.[360]

Other types of capital can only thrive if social capital is present and there is a need for local people and networks to be properly empowered for this to happen. Ostrom believes that institutions that facilitate successful cooperation in these schemes are vital:

> Over the next several decades, the most important consideration in irrigation development will be that of *institutional design* – the process of developing a set of rules that participants in a process understand, agree upon, and are willing to follow. An embedded institutional design is a form of *social capital.*[361]

She believes that this requires a greater understanding of social capital by the parties involved. If there is effective cooperation – i.e. social capital – then productivity is increased and annual maintenance costs reduced.[362] Project evaluations will normally take into account any costs saved in reduced labour, so Ostrom believes

[359] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 199.
[360] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 199.
[361] Ostrom, *Crafting Institutions for Self-Governing Irrigation Systems*, p. 13. Emphasis in the original.
[362] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', p. 193.

that this means that funding should be selective and focus on projects where some investment (including human capital) by the local population is possible.

Ostrom's case-study utilises comprehensive secondary data on irrigation projects. Yet rational choice perceptions of community dynamics dominate her interpretation and there is little attention given to the need for physical capital in some cases. While she cites actual projects, her theoretical formulations of them neglect social, political and economic factors. More specific detail is also needed about what degree of participation is needed to make various projects function optimally.

2.2.6.) What Ostrom's work can offer Putnam's concept of social capital

Ostrom highlights instances of successful cooperation in small localised settings which can be put to good or bad uses. Her concept of social capital examines micro-level instances of where the impact of cooperation in developing countries can be clearly ascertained. She does not attempt to make it a universal concept and apply it to North America or Europe. She is only interested in demonstrating how theoretical collective action dilemmas have been overcome in practice in some instances and why other attempts have failed. To a certain extent she succeeds in doing this. However, her account of motivations (appearing to be primarily selfish) is limited, as is her partial account of broader structural factors.

Ostrom's work is evaluated at the end of this chapter. How it addresses the six issues raised by Putnam's work is explored below.

2.2.6.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

Ostrom uses her concept of social capital as part of a second generation collective action theory that takes into account the social environmental as well as actors' motivations. She emphasises how social capital is needed to help other capitals (natural, physical, and human) function optimally. Similarly to Coleman, but unlike

Putnam, she does not place too great a strain on the concept. It is just one of four capitals, albeit a vital one, and clearly placed in a wider conceptual framework.

2.2.6.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

Ostrom focuses almost exclusively on small groups. She examines communities with closed networks and groups that have definable boundaries. For example, she outlines the theoretical options open to farmers in an irrigation project. The external factors affecting individuals' decisions in this community are clearly definable, such as help from others in the village, government help, and assistance from NGO's.[363] Although she concentrates on small communities, Ostrom's work has a macro-dimension too in the sense that she looks at the impact of national policy and sub-national institutions on such projects. Yet, on the whole, her concept focuses on the micro-level and she is aware that: [t]he lessons from the study of small-scale communities cannot be directly applied in more complex and larger scale collective-action situations.'[364]

2.2.6.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

Like Coleman, Ostrom partly uses social capital to balance considerations of structure and agency. She wishes to develop a second generation collective action theory that can contextualise actors' decisions in broader structures. While she does take into account some structural constraints, she primarily highlights agency. This has the effect of emphasising the importance of actors' (seemingly inherently selfish) motivations. For example, the qualitative studies used by Ostrom are conceptualised as abstract scenarios and are considered in a game theoretic framework.

[363] See Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', pp. 183-98.
[364] Ostrom and Ahn, 'A Social Science Perspective on Social Capital', p. 15.

2.2.6.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

Ostrom believes that social capital – like all human-made capital – can: have benefits but can also fail; be put to positive as well as negative ends and; create opportunities for some but restrict them for others. Therefore she draws attention to both the potential positive and negative outcomes of social capital and draws parallels with other forms of capital. Ostrom believes that social capital might lead to free-riding because it can be a by-product of others' efforts (see point 2.2.6.6. below). To counter this she believes that those benefiting from a scheme (for example an irrigation project) should directly invest in it in one way or another (e.g. finance, labour etc).

2.2.6.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

While there is debate among other social capital authors about the merits of weak versus strong ties, it is interesting that Ostrom – like Coleman – concentrates almost entirely on strong ties in closed networks with definable boundaries. Vast sprawling networks do not enter her equations because there needs to be limited possibilities in order for clear rational calculations to take place. As closed communities become seemingly rarer in the western industrialised nations, perhaps the most suitable examples of them are small rural villages in less developed countries where there are (apparently) fewer complex networks of weak ties.

2.2.6.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

Ostrom believes that individuals in networks are making investments: 'individuals who devote time to constructing patterns of relationships among humans are

building assets whether consciously or unconsciously.'[365] While social capital is often seen as being a by-product of other activities in her work (such as shared norms of reciprocity), Ostrom – like Putnam – also believes that it can be nurtured and harnessed by government and other external institutions (for example in developed rule systems). In addition, she asserts that institutional design can be a form of social capital if it assigns responsibility for paying costs. It is interesting that she emphasises the policy implications of social capital, and believes that the concept can have practical insights. However, she also notes, like Coleman, that social capital which is useful in one setting is not necessarily useful in others. Ostrom asserts that more than any other capital, social capital's value is dependent upon the setting in which it is used.

2.2.6.7.) Does this version of social capital provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Ostrom's version of the concept is narrowly focused on small rural communities. She suggests that social capital is the most dynamic type of capital and can activate the other types of capital for collective activities. Her concentration on closed networks in less developed countries means that is specific to a particular context. She explicitly warns against generalising from these examples and applying the concept elsewhere.

The strength of Ostrom's work is that it is so clearly focused on a certain type of social relations. Looking at micro-level examples of small closed communities, which are dependent on external aid, she achieves a certain conceptual coherence. She highlights the negative aspect of social capital by emphasising the potential for free-riding. While she believes that social capital can be harnessed, she cautions that all individuals should be encouraged to participate in schemes from which they benefit, in order that they are not tempted to free-ride.

Putnam needs to explain how insights from studies of small scale communities can be generalised and transferred to large-scale societies. It is

[365] Ostrom, 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', pp. 178-9.

debatable whether certain mechanisms work in the same way in a large, diffuse and sprawling society as it does in a small community. So Ostrom's work is of limited use to Putnam because of the difference in scale and her concentration on dense networks and strong ties.

2.3.) Summary of Collective Action approaches to social capital

Not only did Putnam use Coleman's definition of social capital in his initial work on the subject, but he also introduced the concept in the context of collective action dilemmas. Yet Putnam never utilised this as a conceptual framework in the way that Coleman and Ostrom do. There is much common ground between Coleman and Ostrom. The two authors both see social capital as a relational concept and not as something that inheres in individuals with stocks accumulating in society at large. They express dissatisfaction with current rational choice/first-generation collective action theories, which they both view as inadequate explanations of human behaviour. They are critical of the use of conceptions of individuals devoid of social context in these theories, and both use social capital as a way to address this issue. However, Coleman is more successful in achieving this in his work on social capital than Ostrom is.

Coleman's concept of social capital provides some interesting insights into cooperation – and the lack of it – and into its consequences. He deploys social capital to look at one aspect of social relations. He is successful in outlining how obligations and trust can be used as resources for cooperation. Coleman also provides some empirical examples of social capital in closed networks (in the forms of small close families and Catholic schools) having a positive affect on high-school dropout rates. However, Coleman is less successful in his aim to synthesise the economic and social streams of theorising. While he refers to both, he often focuses on one or the other in his specific examples of social capital, rather than consistently integrating both in each case. He also offers possible policies for education in the context of the decline of primordial institutions, but does not develop them in any depth.

Ostrom's work certainly provides compelling accounts of collective action in practice and also instances of where it fails. She points out that the value of social capital varies in each instance considerably, but does not apply this in her case-studies to any great degree. Her concept of social capital offers an important insight in the sense that she uses it as an explanatory tool to demonstrate why physical and

human capital alone are insufficient in development projects. She also shows how, of all the types of capital, social capital is the one that is key for cooperation, whereas other types of man-made capital tend to be individualistic in their nature (although physical capital can be used for public works such as roads). Sometimes Ostrom focuses on the motives of individuals at the expense of considering the wider economic (and other structural) realities in less developed countries. It is debatable whether she has developed a truly second generation collective action theory when – despite giving some consideration to the social environment – her conceptualisation mainly concentrates on individuals' selfish motives, without enough consideration of their environment.

Unlike Putnam, Coleman and Ostrom do not put conceptual strain on the concept by linking social capital to macro-outcomes – such as producing better governance and economic wealth *at a national level*. This makes their versions of the concept comparatively more focused and conceptually coherent. While Ostrom does look at the effects of government and institutional policy at the micro-level, her concept never claims that social capital can cure the multitude of ills that Putnam's work suggests and she states that her work can only be applied to small communities.

2.3.1.) What Collective Action approaches can offer Putnam

Interestingly both Coleman and Ostrom concentrate mainly on closed networks and strong ties, which marks them out from the other authors examined in this thesis (except Bourdieu). Coleman essentially looks at the contemporary remnants of primordial social organisation, such as the family and small communities. Ostrom looks at communities with clearly fixed boundaries. Hence their work is only of limited use to Putnam. More recently Putnam's work has emphasised weak ties and posited the notion of bridging social capital. This has been fruitful conceptually, but is not compatible with Coleman's or Ostrom's work, which emphasises the importance of network closure. This is not a deficiency on their part because network closure is central to the coherence of their concepts.

The most striking element of Putnam's use of Coleman's concept is the fact that Putnam deploys it in a different manner and context. In a footnote Putnam notes that in his approach: 'I deviate slightly from James Coleman's "functional" definition of social capital.'[366] Yet the impact of doing this is not fully contemplated by Putnam. Whereas Coleman develops a broader social theory and uses social capital as one part of that, Putnam puts it at the forefront of his work. By not adopting the rest of Coleman's conceptual framework, Putnam's use of the concept isolates it from other key considerations. Putnam therefore should perhaps have not "deviated" from Coleman's definition without considering all of the consequences of doing so.

Coleman and Ostrom are more conceptually coherent than Putnam, especially because they do not relate their notion of social capital to multiple source theories; rather their work is mainly based on one, rational/collective action, and they add elements of social theory to this in order to contextualise individuals' actions. To their credit they do not offer social capital as a concept with major explanatory power, rather as part of larger, more developed, theories.

[366] Putnam, R. D. 1995. 'Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America', *PS: Political Science & Politics* Dec, pp. 664-683. p. 681 n2.

3.) The Network approach to social capital

This chapter will outline an active research paradigm within the sociological tradition from the last twenty years which has culminated in a theory of social capital. On examining the literature there appears to be a clear progression from Granovetter's concept of weak ties to Burt's concept of structural holes and Lin's theory of social resources, right through to the contemporary network version of social capital. This has resulted in Lin's theory of social capital, arguably one of the most comprehensive treatments of the subject to date.

These authors, on the whole, perceive social capital as the resources accessible to an individual through networks; resources that result in gains to the individual. Unlike Putnam, they do not examine the concept in relation to nations or large communities, but rather to individuals (or individuals and small groups in the case of Bourdieu). So their analysis of social capital is not mooted as a macro-level concept explaining societal change, but rather as something that examines the value of an individual's network connections. These authors also uniquely emphasise the value of the resources being accessed, and also take into account the inequality of resource distribution and how this affects the utility of social capital. The reason Bourdieu is included in this chapter is because he was influential on the other network authors in this respect, even though he did not study networks in the same manner.

There are many other network authors that have not been looked at in-depth in this chapter, such as Flap and De Graaf, Erickson, and Marsden, although parts of their commentary are cited. This is because they have used the concept in much the same way as Lin but without offering similarly detailed conceptual deliberation. They also do not provide any unique contributions to the concept when compared to writers such as Granovetter, Burt, Portes, Foley and Edwards, and Lin.

This chapter will consider the various authors' versions of social capital in order to ascertain what they might offer Putnam's work. Bourdieu and Lin are the focus of the most sustained analysis in this chapter as they have produced the most substantial concepts. This chapter will look at Bourdieu first since it is his work that

has influenced more recent conceptual developments. Then there will be a section looking at four network approaches (Granovetter, Burt, Portes, and Foley and Edwards) that – while not offering detailed versions of social capital themselves – have been influential in contemporary debates about the concept. Lin's work will then be examined, which incorporates many of the other authors' ideas. Finally there will be a consideration of whether there is a consensus on a network version of social capital.

3.1.) Bourdieu's work on social capital

Pierre Bourdieu investigated various aspects of education, culture, and social stratification in his work. Portes argues that Bourdieu provided the 'first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital'[367] Despite his influence on concepts of social capital – and upon network authors in particular – it is perhaps surprising that his only real articulation of the concept published in English was contained in a single article, 'The Forms of Capital'.[368] Bourdieu was certainly the first to offer more than just a simplistic definition. He asserts that capital does not have to take an overtly financial form and presents social capital as one of three fundamental types of capital: economic, cultural, and social. The other relevant parts of his work for this thesis are his concepts of habitus and fields, without which his work on capital cannot be properly understood. These are examined first, before moving on to his work on capital.

3.1.1.) The concepts of habitus and fields

The concept of habitus is an important element in Bourdieu's work. He believes that socialisation moulds an individual's world-view and forms a subconscious group identity:

> The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures[369]

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[367] Portes, A. 1998. 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 1-24 p. 3.
[368] Bourdieu, P. 1986 [1983]. 'The Forms of Capital', in Richardson, J. G. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258. This built on two earlier articles: Bourdieu, P. 1979. 'Les trios etats du capital culturel', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 30, pp. 3-6; and Bourdieu, P. 1980. 'Le Capital Social: Notes Provisoires', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 31, pp. 2-3.
[369] Bourdieu, P.1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 72.

Structures can therefore help transmit the dispositions of the group to individuals. Factors such as taste and general perception are rooted in cultural background. Individuals can also identify those with similar dispositions: '[t]he habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices.'[370] This form of classification adds to class identification: 'inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure.'[371]

Bourdieu also believes that individuals and institutions are parts of systems which he refers to as *fields*. He defines this well known concept as:

> ...a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation...in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions[372]

These networks are vital for social capital transmission and aid group identity, which will be explored in more detail later.

The concepts of habitus and fields are both relevant to Bourdieu's conception of capital in general: fields are the networks that foster collective assets, and the occupants of these fields share habitus, which reinforces the group's identity.

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[370] Bourdieu, P. [1979]1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* London: Routledge. p. 170.
[371] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 172.
[372] Wacquant, L. D. 1989. 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu', *Sociological Theory*, vol 7, 26-63. p. 39. p. 50 quoted in Jenkins, R. 2002. *Pierre Bourdieu.* London: Routledge. p. 85.

3.1.2.) Bourdieu's conception of capital

This section will look at Bourdieu's approach to capital in its three main variants. Bourdieu is interested in the tendency of capital to not only exist in a recognisable state, but also in less tangible forms. He believes that capital is something that: a) takes time to accumulate and; b) once obtained has the tendency to persist.[373] He outlines three main forms of capital:

> ...capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.[374]

This is a key passage. Firstly, economic capital is established as the most overt, most tangible form of capital, i.e. financial assets. Secondly, it is suggested that all types of capital can be institutionalised. Thirdly, Bourdieu asserts that cultural and social capital are convertible into economic capital under certain conditions.

3.1.2.1.) Cultural capital

Cultural capital is a concept that is as complex as social capital but one that Bourdieu writes a great deal more on and does so much more systematically.[375] The concept – like habitus and fields – is somewhat enigmatic and Bourdieu does not offer a straightforward overall definition. He does, however, offer some explanation of various forms of it. He asserts that while all classes will have some cultural

[373] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 241.
[374] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', 243.
[375] See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, which cites the concept of cultural capital frequently but does not use the concept of social capital at all.

capital, there are great differentials. Socialisation exposes the members of wealthy, culturally endowed, families, to culture from birth:

> ...the transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital, and it therefore receives proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct, visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled.[376]

Cultural capital is therefore in part a disguised form of capital which is less easy to detect and therefore is less penalised and taxed. Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital can exist in three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalised state. These are outlined below.

The *embodied state* of cultural capital entails an accumulation of culture. This cannot be acquired second-hand and takes a great deal of time to achieve.[377] Despite being a resource that is the result of economic wealth, the value of cultural capital in this state is not easily detectible: '[t]his embodied capital, external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange.'[378] It can be obtained unconsciously without the acquirer realising its value. It also dies with its bearer, and embodied cultural capital cannot be inherited.[379]

Various materials, media, and certain cultural goods, are materially transmissible. These include writings, paintings, monuments, instruments.[380] This is cultural capital in its *objectified state*. It is in this state that the relationship with economic capital is more tangible: '[t]hus cultural goods can be appropriated both materially – which presupposes economic capital – and symbolically – which

[376] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 246.
[377] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 244.
[378] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 244-5.
[379] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 245.
[380] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 246.

presupposes cultural capital.'[381] By buying a painting therefore, one is making both an economic and cultural investment.

Cultural capital in its *institutionalised state* resembles the concept of human capital in some respects, because it is represented by academic qualifications, and the higher the level, the better. These qualifications confer 'institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any given agent'.[382] The fact that money can buy better recognised education makes the relationship with economic capital reasonably apparent. Yet Bourdieu notes how the value of these qualifications changes and they have ill-defined profits. This is because the value of education fluctuates according to its scarcity.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has many disparate elements. What they have in common is that they are all in some way 'owned' by the individual, either inhering in them or owned by them as a cultural artefact. Bourdieu's concept of social capital will now be examined, but cultural capital will be returned to when the transmissibility of all three types of capital – and the relationship between them – is examined later.

3.1.3.) Social capital

Bourdieu's concept of social capital is firmly grounded within a broader notion of capital. For Bourdieu, whereas economic and cultural capital (which includes education) entails the *possession* of resources (whether literal or symbolic), social capital has more to do with *access* to resources. In contrast to Putnam's definition where social capital is networks, norms and trust, Bourdieu perceives the resources (actual or potential) that are obtainable *through* networks as social capital. This definition is much narrower in scope than Putnam's. Bourdieu's full definition of social capital is:

> ...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual

[381] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 247.
[382] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 248.

> acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them.[383]

It is therefore the resources that are social capital, not the networks or the trust facilitating access to them. Social capital is conceptualised as a group asset that can be accessed by individual members of the group. There are many points in this dense and complex definition that are problematic, however, and it needs to be unpacked. Key aspects of it are not clarified. For example, the frequency of activation of social capital (the difference between *potential* resources and *actual* resources) is not clarified by Bourdieu. It is also important to note that Bourdieu specifies that it needs to be a *durable* network, but does not suggest how durability is to be understood and measured. His specification of '*more or less* institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'[384] is vague. Do the relationships need to be institutionalised or not for social capital to be created? For Bourdieu the type of relations, and the networks individuals belong to, can vary greatly in both form and content:

> These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them; in this case, they are more or less really enacted and so maintained and reinforced, in exchanges.[385]

It is important to note Bourdieu's emphasis on the importance of closed networks (similarly to Coleman and Ostrom). While highlighting the importance of clubs for gaining social capital, he states that the family is 'the main site of the accumulation

[383] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 248-9.
[384] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 248-9. My emphasis.
[385] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.

and transmission of that kind of capital'.[386] Also Bourdieu believes that – similarly to cultural capital – social capital is not possessed in a vacuum. This is because while the number of connections matter, connections to those who have a great deal of economic or cultural capital are more valuable than connections to those that do not:

> The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.[387]

This is a key point that is built upon by later network authors. Connections in themselves may be useful, but the value is dependent upon the resources these connections provide access to. Bourdieu believes therefore that there is some relationship between social, cultural and economic capital:

> ...although it is relatively irreducible to the economic and cultural capital possessed by a given agent, or even by the whole set of agents to whom he is connected, social capital is never completely independent of it because the exchanges instituting mutual acknowledgment presuppose the reacknowledgment of a minimum of objective homogeneity, and because it exerts a multiplier effect on the capital he possesses in his own right.[388]

This is an important distinction. Social capital cannot be understood separately from economic and cultural capital, although it is clearly distinguishable from both. The position of the person an individual has a connection to in a hierarchy would become a core part of Lin's theory of social capital and is examined later in this chapter. It is a seemingly obvious but key point: the value of connections to people is largely contingent on the value of each person's resources. This is a central tenet of the network version of social capital that appears to originate in the work of Bourdieu.

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[386] Bourdieu, P. 1993. *Sociology in Question.* London: Sage. p. 33.
[387] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.
[388] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.

Bourdieu asserts that every group has 'its more or less institutionalized forms of delegation which enable it to concentrate the totality of the social capital, which is the basis of the existence of the group'.[389] One example offered is the head of the family, the *pater familias*. The power of the 'head of the group' (e.g. the patriarch) is also emphasised by Coleman (see the previous chapter of this thesis). It is a key position:

> The institutionalized delegation, which ensures the concentration of social capital, also has the effect of limiting the consequences of individual lapses by explicitly delimiting responsibilities and authorizing the recognized spokesmen to shield the group as a whole from discredit by expelling or excommunicating the embarrassing individuals.[390]

A good example of preserving a group in this way offered by Bourdieu is a family vetting potential newcomers through marriage.[391]

It is important to note that Bourdieu does not set out to demonstrate that social capital is a good thing, nor does he consider that it can be put to good or bad uses. There is a suggestion of negative effects, such as oppression and exclusion of outsiders, which can be seen in other authors' work. However this is not discussed by Bourdieu in relation to social capital. He appears to have developed the concept originally to examine a particular stratum of society:

> ...it was necessary to construct the object that I call social capital [...] to see that high-society socializing is, for certain people, whose power and authority are based on social capital, their principle occupation. An enterprise based on social capital has to ensure its own reproduction through a specific form of labour (inaugurating monuments, chairing charities, etc.) that presupposes professional skills, and therefore an apprenticeship, and an expenditure of time and energy.[392]

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[389] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 251.
[390] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 251.
[391] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 250.
[392] Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, p. 33.

He believes that this is comparative to various other examples, from the nobility of the Middle Ages to the characters in the work of Proust.[393]

Bourdieu sees the groups as very much closed networks, with each member of the group 'instituted as a custodian of the limits of the group'.[394] Again the need for active membership is emphasised: '[t]he reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed.'[395] It is in this area that the genesis of more sophisticated network models of social capital can be seen.

In another work Bourdieu briefly outlines how, in certain cases, a society's structure dictates patterns of social capital:

> Acknowledging that capital can take a variety of forms is indispensable to explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies. For example, to account for the shape of social space in old democratic nations such as Sweden or in Soviet-type societies, one must take into consideration this peculiar form of social capital constituted by political capital which has the capacity to yield considerable profits and privileges, in a manner similar to economic capital in other social fields, by operating a "partrimonialization" of collective resources (through unions and the Labor party in the one case, the Communist party in the other).[396]

This demonstrates that the type of society, e.g. state socialist or social democratic capitalist, will dictate what kind of groups possess more privileged forms of social capital. This further underlines how the utility of social capital changes from one context to another.

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[393] Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, p. 33.
[394] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 250.
[395] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 250.
[396] Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. 1992. *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 119.

3.1.4.) Conversions between different types of capital

Where Bourdieu's concept of social capital is particularly insightful is in its attempt to address its relationship with economic capital and the relationship between all forms of capital in general. While cultural and social capital are in some ways derived from or related to economic capital, the process is not a completely straightforward one of conversion. This is particularly the case with social capital. While certain goods and services can be obtained immediately through connections, others are dependant on the social capital of relationships or social obligations which have been maintained for a period of time for their own sake, i.e. not merely for gain:

> In contrast to the cynical but also economical transparency of economic exchange, in which equivalents change hands in the same instant, the essential ambiguity of social exchange, which presupposes misrecognition, in other words, a form of faith and of bad faith (in the sense of self-deception), presupposes a much more subtle economy of time.[397]

This is an important point about individuals not always being conscious about the outcomes of social exchange. It implies that social capital mainly does not involve an obviously instrumental act. However, Bourdieu does – as already noted – believe that ultimately all social and cultural capital is linked in part to economic capital, whether or not the process is obvious, even to the agents receiving the benefits:

> ...it has to be posited simultaneously that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital and that these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root, in other words – but only in the last analysis – at the root of their effects.[398]

[397] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 252.
[398] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 252.

Therefore Bourdieu – while emphasising the link – believes that the reduction of all types of capital to their economic value ignores the complexity of social exchanges. For example, investment in social relations may have little tangible economic benefit in the short-term; on the contrary, it might appear to be a waste of time and resources. The drawback with investing in the two non-overtly economic types of capital is the comparatively higher risk if agents try to calculate what might be gained from an investment:

> Everything which helps to disguise the economic aspect also tends to increase the risk of loss (particularly the intergenerational transfers). Thus the (apparent) incommensurability of the different types of capital introduces a high degree of uncertainty into all transactions between holders of different types. Similarly, the declared refusal of calculation and of guarantees which characterizes exchanges tending to produce a social capital in the form of a capital of obligations that are usable in the more or less long term (exchange of gifts, services, visits, etc.) necessarily entails the risk of ingratitude, the refusal of that recognition of nonguaranteed debts which such exchanges aim to produce.[399]

It is interesting that Bourdieu states that agents *aim to produce* a certain return, suggesting that there can potentially be an instrumental consideration which later network authors – such as Lin – emphasise. This is in addition to Bourdieu's belief that social capital production can also be unconscious, as outlined earlier.

3.1.5.) Empirical evidence

Bourdieu denies that his work on social capital is purely theoretical. He asserts that social effects:

> ...are particularly visible in all cases in which different individuals obtain very unequal profits from virtually equivalent (economic or cultural) capital, depending

[399] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 253-4.

> on the extent to which they can mobilize by proxy the capital of a group [...] that is more or less constituted as such and more or less rich in capital'.[400]

Despite his concept of social capital apparently having its origins in observation, no systematic methodology is provided to test his social capital hypothesis. Bourdieu offers few specific measures of social capital and there have been few empirical studies utilising his conceptualisation. He does suggest that title (e.g. of nobility) is indicative of social capital, but this status is not easily quantifiable, or at least Bourdieu does not try to quantify it as social capital. He uses a range of quantitative and qualitative data in his other work to illustrate various concepts. For example, in *Distinction* he examines the taste and cultural practices of different classes to measure cultural capital. This includes empirical data – divided by class – about: favourite painters, being able to name a certain number of composers, the type of art activities enjoyed (such as visiting a museum), education level of parents etc.[401] In one study, one of the first in which he uses the term social capital, he uses plenty of empirical measures of cultural capital but only mentions social capital fleetingly, asserting that it is: 'a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance, in a political career.'[402] Interestingly, in a footnote to illustrate this point Bourdieu lists the membership of clubs in the *Who's Who* book of top professionals, but does not pursue this line of enquiry in any depth.[403] Elsewhere he analyses the advancements of scientists and mentions social capital briefly but offers no empirical measures, just conjecture.[404]

The one study of Bourdieu's that does use measures of social capital throughout – after a fashion – is *Homo Academicus*, his study of modern academic culture. While social capital is not examined conceptually in any great depth, it is

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[400] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p 256 n11.
[401] For examples see Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 526-545.
[402] Bourdieu, P. 1977. 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in Karabel, J. and Halsey, A. H. *Power and Ideology in Education.* New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 487-511. p. 503.
[403] See Bourdieu, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', p. 509 n21.
[404] Bourdieu, P. 1991. 'The Peculiar History of Scientific Reason', *Sociological Forum,* 6 (1), pp. 3-26. This is a consideration of the career paths of scientists. Bourdieu uses the term social capital in the abstract but does not use it in the main text.

mentioned in the text and appears in the appendix as a heading to various empirical measures that appear throughout the book. Rather surprisingly these are seen as interchangeable with measures of economic capital and are listed as 'demographic indicators and indicators of economic and social capital, inherited and acquired'.[405] That these are not clearly separated is quite staggering, even when it is considered in the context of Bourdieu's emphasis on the importance of resources to social capital. In the main body of the text there is no consideration of the implications of these measures as *social* as opposed to *economic* capital.

One study based on Bourdieu's conception of cultural fields is that of Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo.[406] They look at a group of 222 writers and literati in Cologne. They use membership of networks (i.e. membership of groups) as indicators of social capital, which follows on from Bourdieu's tentative work in this area outlined above. They find that significant differences in social capital, as well as cultural capital, distinguished elite from non-elite positions and conclude that levels of social capital among the writers are closely linked to their cultural capital. Unfortunately, measures of networks alone tell us little about the "use value" (see the section on Foley and Edwards later in this chapter) of social capital i.e. the value of the resources being accessed. While it is an interesting attempt at a micro-level analysis of social capital, the problem is that while it is informative about Bourdieu's notion of capital in general, it tells us little about social capital and the benefits it might bring. Like much of the empirical work in the field, no real explanation is offered about how social capital is functioning in the data. The result is more of a convincing operationalisation of Bourdieu's concept of cultural fields than of social capital, but at least it provides an interesting study of associational membership.

[405] Bourdieu, P. 1988. *Homo Academicus*, Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 227. The heading was in block capitals in the original.
[406] Anheier, H. K., Gerhards, J., Romo, F. P. 1995. 'Forms of Social Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: examining Bourdieu's social topography', *American Journal of Sociology* 100, pp. 859-903. pp. 860-1.

3.1.6.) What Bourdieu's work can offer Putnam's concept of social capital

In one journal article Bourdieu offers a concise articulation of three types of capital and how they interact. Among these is a briefly outlined concept of social capital. For Bourdieu, social capital is the potential and actual resources that are gained through an individual's network connections. This is a narrower, but in some ways more coherent, definition than that of Putnam, yet it also has key elements that are ambiguous.

In his definition Bourdieu does make a simple but very valuable differentiation between the access to resources and the resources themselves. For Portes this is a key distinction: 'it is important to distinguish the resources themselves from the ability to obtain them by virtue of membership in different social structures, a distinction explicit in Bourdieu but obscured in Coleman.'[407] By emphasising the resources, Bourdieu draws attention to the importance of economic wealth and class. He believes that social capital is affected by an agents' family, their economic status, and their social position.

How Bourdieu's work can address the six issues raised by Putnam's work is examined below.

3.1.6.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

Bourdieu investigates how individuals in groups and networks can draw on collective assets. In this sense his work is similar to Coleman and Ostrom's, although whereas they see collective action as mainly positive, Bourdieu only ever presents it as a way that elites preserve and perpetuate themselves. He contextualises his version of social capital within his wider approach to capital. While he only outlines three types of capital (economic, cultural and social) when writing on social capital, elsewhere he wrote of many others (for example academic capital, reading capital, and symbolic capital). For Bourdieu, social capital is strongly interlinked

[407] Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', p. 5.

with cultural and economic capital. He suggests that they are at the root of social capital, although social capital is never entirely reducible to them.

Social capital is used as part of Bourdieu's general assertion that society is dominated by elites whose power and wealth is reproduced through direct and indirect means, and the concept links with his notions of fields and habitus. Unfortunately he rarely uses the concept of social capital in his work. So while it is fully compatible with his overall conception of capital, it remains underdeveloped, especially when compared to his work on cultural capital.

3.1.6.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

Bourdieu's level of analysis is mainly of small groups which form part of a larger class. The size of networks examined in his conception varies. He writes of families, associations, parties and nations as groups that share social capital, but mainly examines small elite networks.[408] The fact that he cites nations in this context is interesting and is prescient of Putnam in some ways, but he never explores this in detail (for example he only fleetingly compares Sweden's social capital to that in the former Soviet Union). Only families and small networks are actually examined in any depth in his work on social capital.

3.1.6.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

Bourdieu mainly focuses on structures that embody and perpetuate inequality. There is little room in his model for individual action due to structural and cultural constraints. Actors can seemingly pursue profits, but have little chance of changing their current position if they do not have prior stocks of the various capitals.

In Bourdieu's conception social capital's intangible nature in the short-term makes individual investment difficult to gauge. In addition, the inequalities in economic and cultural capital can not be countered by an individual's actions alone. However, the networks and common identities still need effort to be maintained by

[408] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 251.

individuals and are 'the product of an endless effort at institution'.[409] Yet ultimately the value of an individual's social capital will depend on the circles they move in, which is dependent on their prior levels of economic and cultural capital.

3.1.6.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

Bourdieu is arguably the author who most emphasises the negative aspect of social capital. For him it is part of the reproduction of inequality because elite groups will have vastly better resources to draw upon. While this is a positive factor for those in such elite networks, it is extremely negative for those outside of them. Bourdieu believes that members of privileged groups are bound together by a common identity and seek to exclude those dissimilar to themselves. This exclusion is symptomatic of general economic inequality.

3.1.6.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

Bourdieu emphasises the role of dense homogenous networks, the members of which are very careful about who is omitted in order to preserve its status (see point 3.1.6.4. above). He does not consider the possible merits of weak ties. This is perhaps because he alone does not champion social capital as a positive collective activity or as enabling individual social mobility. Rather he sees it as a conservative force (for the society as a whole, not for those individuals that directly benefit).

3.1.6.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

Bourdieu believes that members of groups do not always *consciously* pursue profits, but that these benefits are important nevertheless and the 'profits which accrue from

[409] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.

membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible.'[410] These can take the form of material profits or symbolic profits, which might come from association with a prestigious group. Unlike the family, which provides a genealogical bond, a network of connections needs to be maintained.[411] He outlines different types of networks, some of which are more instrumental:

> ...the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, [...] into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights).[412]

For Bourdieu this is achieved through 'consecration' which presupposes, encourages, and produces mutual knowledge and recognition among members.[413]

Bourdieu asserts that it would be difficult to invest in social capital directly as the immediate gains are not tangible. An act of kindness, concern, or a gift may be seen as an unnecessarily expense: '[f]rom a narrowly economic standpoint, this effort is bound to be seen as pure wastage, but in the terms of the logic of social exchanges, it is a solid investment, the profits of which will appear, in the long run, in monetary or other form.'[414] The lack of a clear return on investments in social capital was also mentioned by Coleman, as noted in the last chapter

3.1.6.7.) Does this version of social capital provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Bourdieu asserts that social capital is very beneficial for those who are members of privileged networks, but is negative for society as a whole as it helps to perpetuate

[410] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.
[411] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 249.
[412] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 249-50.
[413] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 250.
[414] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 253.

inequality. He places a great deal of emphasis on structural constraints upon actors and shows little interest in the possibility of social mobility through social capital. Related to this he does not consider weak ties because network closure is important for the functioning and maintenance of the elite groups. Bourdieu believes that social capital on the whole is not consciously pursued, rather that it is unconsciously obtained, and that its ultimate value is dictated by an individual's prior wealth and status.

The singularity of Bourdieu's work makes its relevance to Putnam's concept of social capital somewhat limited. Social capital's clear relationship with cultural and economic capital in the work of Bourdieu certainly contextualises it within a broader conceptual framework. Yet in order to use Bourdieu's version of social capital Putnam would have to subscribe to the concept of cultural capital, which he has never used, preferring human capital. Like Coleman and Ostrom (but for different reasons) Bourdieu focuses on groups with network closure and not on the weak ties that are so important to Putnam's later work. This is another reason for his limited use for Putnam's version. Bourdieu's conceptual framework is so distinct that it would be difficult for Putnam to adopt only parts of it.

3.2.) Minor network authors

There follows a brief study of four sets of authors – Granovetter, Burt, Portes, and Foley and Edwards – that have made important contributions to the network version of social capital, without necessarily producing a great deal of material on the subject. It is necessary to understand their work in order to comprehend how certain elements of the concept have developed. They will not be analysed in the same depth as Bourdieu or Lin, but it will be highlighted where their work is relevant to the six issues raised by Putnam's conception.

3.2.1.) Granovetter's concept of weak ties

Although he did not use the term social capital, most social capital authors have referred to Granovetter's work on social ties. His seminal article 'The Strength of Weak Ties' is cited not just by network authors, but by Putnam as well.[415] A summary of Granovetter's work is best placed among the network authors because he uses network analysis and they discuss and incorporate his work most extensively.

Granovetter, like so many social theorists, is interested in linking micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns. He concentrates on the strength of ties, offering a qualitative analysis which he claims has a potential to form quantitative models. He defines the parameters of tie strength thus: 'the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.'[416] He believes that when looking at two agents it might be intuitively ascertained whether a tie is strong, weak or absent. Strong ties are to those people from similar backgrounds and form part of a dense network, whereas weak ties are more casual relations that may prove to be of greater benefit: 'those to whom we are weakly tied

[415] Putnam, R. D. with Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. Y. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton University Press. p. 175.
[416] Granovetter, M. S. 1973. 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology* 78: pp. 1360-80. p. 1361.

are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive.'[417] He differentiates between bridging ties and non-bridging ties. Bridging weak ties link ego (the individual) to other small groups and their consequent indirect contacts; therefore these ties are:

> ...of importance not only in ego's manipulation of networks, but also in that they are the channels through which ideas, influences, or information socially distant from ego may reach him. The fewer indirect contacts one has the more encapsulated he will be in terms of knowledge of the world beyond his own friendship circle[418]

Granovetter was criticised by some for emphasising tie strength as opposed to bridging potential (see Burt's critique in the next section). Granovetter responds to these criticisms with the following clarification:

> I have not argued that all or even most weak ties serve the functions described in SWT [strength of weak ties] – only those that act as bridges between network segments. This importance of weak ties is asserted to be that they are disproportionately likely to be bridges, as compared to strong ties, which should be underrepresented in that role.[419]

This means that the bridging function, not the tie strength, is the key part of the process. As will be demonstrated, other writers (Burt and Lin) have not noted this later clarification by Granovetter and continue to criticise him for his apparent oversight.

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[417] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1371.
[418] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', pp. 1370-71.
[419] Granovetter, M. 1982. 'The Strength of Weak Ties – A Network Theory Revisited', in Marsden, P. V., and Lin, N. (eds) *Social Structure and Network Analysis.* Beverly Hills: Sage, pp. 105-130. p. 130.

3.2.1.1.) Empirical work

Granovetter looks at the implications of tie strength for communities. He examines working class communities that could mobilise resources for common goals against threats, such as urban renewal, and those that could not. He looks at the former Italian community in the West End of Boston which was destroyed by urban renewal. He asserts that the community's inability to mobilise against the renewal was due to it being fragmented into small groups and that there was a lack of bridging weak ties between these small groups. There were many strong ties but these were in isolated cliques. He asserts that formal organisations and work settings are two common sources of weak ties, yet in this community organisational membership was almost nil and few people actually worked in the community itself.[420] While he supposes that it is unimaginable that there were no weak ties at all in the community, if none of them were bridges then it would explain why the community fragmented in the way that it did. He does note that the absence of network data means that it is only speculation in this case, but it might well provide a potential conceptual framework: 'the more local bridges (per person?) in a community and the greater their degree, the more cohesive the community and the more capable of acting in concert.'[421] It is interesting that he highlights weak ties' utility to community cohesion because most network authors only look at the opportunities they provide individuals. Granovetter fails to provide enough detail about this example to justify his theoretical explanation of the events, but it does lay the foundation for more detailed studies of such communities, such as the studies done by Portes (examined shortly).

3.2.1.2.) Summary

Not only does Granovetter believe that weak ties help individuals, but also that they aid larger communities as well: 'weak ties, often denounced as generative of

[420] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1375.
[421] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1376. Rhetorical question in brackets in the original.

alienation [...] are here seen as indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities; strong ties, breeding local cohesion, lead to overall fragmentation.'[422] He also had some reservations about the notion of weak ties, however, and these are prescient of the controversies that were to enter debates about social capital twenty-five years later:

> Treating only the *strength* of ties ignores, for instance, all the important issues involving their content. What is the relation between strength and degree of specialization of ties, or between strength and hierarchical structure? How can "negative" ties be handled? Should tie strength be developed as a continuous variable? What is the development sequence of network structure over time?[423]

Granovetter does not address these issues in any depth, but most are considered in this thesis, especially in relation to the work of Lin.

Granovetter's work was groundbreaking for looking at the benefits of bridging ties. His notion has been incorporated in detail into Burt and Lin's work on social capital, and has also been used to some extent by other social capital authors. It also informs the bridging and bonding social capital distinction used by Putnam. Those looking at social capital in a network context tend to stay closer to Granovetter's original work as opposed to Putnam's more metaphorical use of the insight of weak ties. Granovetter shifted the emphasis of network analysis from closed networks to more disparate network connections. He is therefore a key link between Bourdieu's analysis of closed networks to later network authors' broader perspectives.

3.2.1.3.) Does Granovetter provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

By emphasising the importance of weak ties Granovetter's contribution to Putnam is already established, although Putnam uses the notion without considering all of the

[422] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1378.
[423] Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', p. 1378.

implications of doing so (see the sections on Burt and Lin below). At a time when the orthodox view was that strong ties were the most beneficial type of relations, Granovetter asserted the opposite, suggesting that weak ties can be more beneficial than strong ties and that a lack of them could lead to community fragmentation. The implication of this to Putnam's work is that, short of an individual forming strong bonds with everyone, a community needs a great deal of weak ties between its members to avoid fragmentation. This is in contrast to other network authors' more individualistic analysis of weak ties. Putnam also believes that greater bridging social capital (weak ties) 'can generate broader identities and reciprocity'.[424] Granovetter also raises the issue that some ties can be negative in certain instances.

3.2.2.) Burt's concept of structural holes

Burt is another important author in the development of the network version of social capital, and used the term "social capital" before Lin did, in 1992. He is described by Schuller, Baron, and Field as '[p]robably the most prominent scholar to have made an explicit bridge between networks and social capital'.[425]

Burt believes there are three types of capital (similarly to Coleman): financial, human and social. He defines social capital thus: '[s]ocial capital is at once the resources contacts hold and the structure of contacts in a network. The first term describes whom you reach. The second describes how you reach.'[426] So Burt, like Coleman, Putnam, and Ostrom, but unlike Bourdieu, includes resources *and* the access to resources in his definition of social capital. In addition, Burt's broad definition sees social capital as relational, as opposed to financial and human capital,

[424] Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon & Schuster. p. 23.
[425] Schuller, T., Baron, S., and Field, J. 2000. 'Social Capital: A Review and Critique', in Baron, S., Field, J., and Schuller, T. *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-38. p.21.
[426] Burt, R. S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 12.

which are the property of individuals.[427] Interestingly, Burt describes social capital as a metaphor, a notion that will be returned to shortly.[428]

In order to comprehend Burt's concept of social capital fully, it is necessary to examine it in the context of his concept of structural holes.

3.2.2.1.) Structural holes

The study of structural holes focuses on the gaps between non-redundant contacts that can be potentially beneficial to those who can cross them:

> By dint of who is connected to whom, holes exist in the social structure of the competitive arena. The holes in social structure, or, more simply, structural holes, are disconnections or nonequivalencies between players in the arena. Structural holes are entrepreneurial opportunities for information access, timing, referrals, and control.[429]

So any bridges across these holes are valuable. The benefits that these network bridges can bring are resources. Burt uses the term social capital as a metaphor for the advantages of network position:

> Assets get locked into suboptimal exchanges. An individual's position in the structure of these exchanges can be an asset in its own right. That asset is social capital, in essence, a story about location effects in differentiated markets. The structural hole argument defines social capital in terms of the information and control advantages of being the broker in relations between people otherwise disconnected in social structure.[430]

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[427] Burt, *Structural Holes*, p. 9.
[428] Burt states that 'social capital is a metaphor about advantage.' See Burt, R. S. 2001. 'Structural Holes versus Network Closure as Social Capital', in Lin, N., Cook, K., and Burt, R. S. *Social Capital: Theory and Research.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter. pp. 31-56. p. 31.
[429] Burt, *Structural Holes*, pp. 1-2.
[430] Burt, R. S. 1997. 'The Contingent Value of Social Capital', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42 (3) pp. 339-65. p. 340.

Burt's concept is therefore not a version concept of social capital; rather he uses the term as shorthand to describe the process of utilising structural holes.

While being influenced by Granovetter's work on the strength of ties, Burt asserts that his own work describes a broader process. He believes that weak ties are only one – and a potentially misleading – element of his notion of structural holes:

> A bridge is at once two things. It is a chasm spanned and the span itself. By title and subsequent application, the weak tie argument is about the strength of relationships that span the chasm between two social clusters. The structural hole argument is about the chasm spanned. It is the latter that generates information benefits. Whether a relationship is strong or weak, it generates information benefits when it is a bridge over a structural hole.[431]

Essentially, Burt perceives tie strength as a technical detail of a broader, more complex process. He therefore believes that tie strength is not the causal agent but a correlate, and that the important aspect to focus on is the information obtained through bridging the structural hole.[432]

3.2.2.2.) Empirical work

Burt looks at one of the key debates in social capital: the relative merits of closed networks (as espoused in the work of Coleman in particular) versus open networks.[433] Using case studies of managers he examines the relationship between network constraints and beneficial outcomes for individuals, such as early promotion and large bonuses. He concludes that closed networks are associated with substandard performance. Those with less constraints tend to reap more benefits: '[f]or individuals and groups, networks that span structural holes are associated with creativity and innovation, positive evaluations, early promotion, high compensation

[431] Burt, *Structural Holes*, p. 28.
[432] Burt, *Structural Holes*, pp. 27-28.
[433] Burt, 'Structural Holes versus Network Closure'. pp. 39-45.

and profits.'[434] Yet Burt does not believe that closed networks are totally without benefits. A closed network can be good for internal groups in a company as it 'eliminates structural holes within the team, which improves communication and coordination within the team.'[435] A strong internal group can properly realise the benefits of non-redundant contacts beyond the group. Burt's difference to Coleman is mainly to do with their research questions. Coleman looks at collective action as well as individual gain, while Burt looks solely at the latter.

More recently Burt has suggested that bridges across structural holes are prone to decay. In a dataset of the social networks of bankers in a large organisation over four years, he found that nine out of ten bridge relations that exist one year are gone the next.[436] The relationships are especially vulnerable when new. This is particularly interesting in the context of Bourdieu's belief in the importance of durable networks and the effort needed to maintain them. Burt also looks at tie age, and finds that a tie has slower decay the longer it has lasted. He asserts that an individual with greater experience should be more able to identify business associates with whom they are compatible.[437]

3.2.2.3.) Summary

Burt uses social capital mainly as a term to describe bridging across structural holes – the spaces between clusters of agents – and the benefits this can produce. He looks at small networks, mainly the ties within a company. Burt's definition of social capital is broad and combines resources with the structures through which they can be accessed. His work on structural holes has been influential on other network social capital authors, especially Lin, although it is not a comprehensive concept of social capital as such. Burt is important to the development of the network version of social capital as he builds on the work of Granovetter, and parts of his concept are incorporated into Lin's more detailed theory of social capital.

[434] Burt, 'Structural Holes versus Network Closure', p. 45.
[435] Burt, 'Structural Holes versus Network Closure', p. 49.
[436] Burt, R. S. 2002. 'Bridge Decay', *Social Networks* 24, pp. 333-363. pp. 344-346.
[437] Burt, 'Bridge Decay', p. 343.

3.2.2.4.) Does Burt provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Burt's relevance to Putnam's work is his clarification of issues surrounding the all-important weak ties. Burt built on Granovetter's notion and explicitly used the term "social capital" in his analysis of business networks. His key contribution is the notion of structural holes, which looks at many of the same elements as Granovetter's work on the strength of weak ties. He also provides some important insights into the benefits of bridging ties, and empirically evaluates the relative merits of closed versus open networks. Yet he concentrates on individuals work-based relations, which tend to be more instrumentally based. This limits his work's utility for Putnam somewhat. Yet the notion of structural holes can help to develop the concept of bridging social capital. It provides some insight into what weak ties can achieve if they bridge to more valuable resources. This is further developed by Lin, and will be explored later in the chapter.

3.2.3.) Portes' analysis of social capital

Some of the most illuminating material on social capital has been written by Alejandro Portes. He frames his work on social capital in the context of its origins in sociological theory. Although his later work on the subject is ostensibly an analysis of the work of others, he also outlines his own ideas on the concept. His most noticeable contribution was his (with co-authors) pioneering critique highlighting some of the downsides of social capital, which are outlined in Chapter One of this thesis.[438] Many of his conceptual deliberations are surmised from empirical work on immigrant communities. He sees work on social capital as an ongoing research enterprise, with its merit yet to be proven, opposed to a concept that is already fully developed.

[438] Portes, A., and Sensenbrenner, J. 1993. 'Embeddedness and immigration: notes on the social determinants of economic action', *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (6), pp. 1320-1350. see pp. 1338-1344; Portes, A. & Landolt, P. 1996. 'The downside of social capital', *The American Prospect* 26/May-June 18-21. Internet version taken from: http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V7/26/26-cnt2.htm pp. 1-15.

3.2.3.1.) Portes' concept of social capital

Portes' original work uses social capital – as do Coleman and Ostrom – when considering the relative merits of a market approach to economic action as compared to more sociological approaches. For example, Portes and Sensenbrenner approach the debate by using social capital to mediate between the two extremes (much like Coleman does). They outline their position thus:

> We begin by redefining social capital as those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behaviour of its members, even if these expectations are not orientated toward the economic sphere.[439]

They believe that previous studies using social capital had been 'too vague concerning its origins and too instrumentalist about its effects.'[440] They state that their definition 'differs from Coleman's, where the emphasis is on social structures facilitating individual rational pursuits.'[441] The aim of their work on social capital is 'to identify the various mechanisms leading to the emergence of social capital and to highlight its consequences, positive and negative.'[442] Later Portes, with Landolt, emphasises the importance of the resources being accessed: 'the outcomes will vary depending on what resources are obtained, who is excluded from them, and what is demanded in exchange.'[443]

While Portes advanced this version of social capital with Sensenbrenner, he has been more reticent about providing a detailed concept of social capital in his later work on the subject. He still engages with the concept, but more as a commentator on the field. Recently he identified three key elements of the concept that he believes need to be generally differentiated and emphasised: '(*a*) the possessors of social capital (those making claims); (*b*) the sources of social capital

[439] Portes and Sensenbrenner, 'Embeddedness and immigration', p. 1323.
[440] Portes and Sensenbrenner, 'Embeddedness and immigration', p. 1346.
[441] Portes and Sensenbrenner, 'Embeddedness and immigration', p. 1323.
[442] Portes and Sensenbrenner, 'Embeddedness and immigration', p. 1346.
[443] Portes and Landolt, 'The downside of social capital'. p. 5.

(those agreeing to these demands); (*c*) the resources themselves.'[444] He asserts that since the work of Coleman discussions of these three elements in conceptions of social capital have been mixed, causing confusion. He seeks to clarify the situation by separating these key elements. He draws particular attention to the relationship between those agents making claims (element a) and those agreeing to their demands (element b). While those making claims have seemingly understandable desires (gain), the motivation of the donors is more obscure. Why would individuals make their assets available without any assured returns? Portes believes that the motives of these agents 'are the core processes that the concept of social capital seeks to capture.'[445] This debate echoes the work of Coleman, who asserts that social capital is more often than not a by-product of other activities, and that it is difficult to consciously pursue due to its intangible nature.

Portes has expressed major doubts about social capital being cited as a feature of larger communities, such as in the work of Putnam, as he believes that it has never been explicitly conceptualised in the same depth as it has been as an individual asset: '[t]he heuristic value of the concept suffers accordingly as it risks becoming synonymous with each and all things that are positive in social life.'[446] He also believes that there is a danger in simultaneously looking at the concept at individual and collective levels as the two may conflict in some instances, for example:

> ...the right 'connections' allow certain persons to gain access to profitable public contracts and to bypass regulations binding on others. Individual social capital in such instances consists precisely in the ability to undermine collective social capital, defined as 'civic spirit' and grounded on impartial application of the laws.[447]

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[444] Portes, 'Social Capital', p. 6.
[445] Portes, 'Social Capital', pp. 5-6.
[446] Portes, A. 2000. 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', *Sociological Forum.* 15 (1), pp. 1-12. p. 3.
[447] Portes, A. and Landolt, P. 2000. 'Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of its Role in Development', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, pp. 529-547. p. 535.

He concludes that it is too early to champion the positive effects of social capital in either its individual or collective form because the 'observed effects may be spurious or because they are compatible with alternative explanations arising from different theoretical quarters.'[448]

3.2.3.2.) Empirical work

One of Portes' hypotheses is that closed networks not only bring their members benefits but also have negative consequences too, such as the absence of freedom and choice in situations involving enforceable trust. Portes and co-authors look at various ethnic groups, such as the Cuban community in Miami[449] and the Dominican immigrant community in New York City[450] to illustrate closed networks. They demonstrate how such groups can potentially provide valuable resources: '[a] solidary ethnic community represents, simultaneously, a market for culturally defined goods, a pool of reliable low-wage labor, and a potential source for start-up capital.'[451] However, there are negative consequences to this, explored in detail in Chapter One of this thesis, which include: exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward levelling norms.[452]

Because the ethnic enclaves consist of mainly strong ties, studies of them can provide examples of closed communities in practice. Portes cites a whole range of ethnographic research of his own, and from other authors, and these are particularly useful for highlighting the possible negative consequences of social capital.[453] Portes is able to demonstrate instances of bounded solidarity and trust – and the various

[448] Portes, 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', p. 10.
[449] Portes, A. 1987. 'The Social Origins of the Cuban Enclave Economy of Miami', *Sociological Perspectives* 30 (4), pp. 340-372; Portes, A., and Stepick, A. 1993. *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
[450] Portes, A., and Guarnizo, L. E. 1991. 'Tropical Capitalists: U.S.– Bound Immigration and Small Enterprise Development in the Dominican Republic', in Diaz-Briquets, S., and Weintraub, S. (eds). *Migration, Remittances, and Small Business Development, Mexico and Caribbean Basin Countries.* Boulder, Colo: Westview, pp. 103-27.
[451] Portes and Sensenbrenner, 'Embeddedness and immigration', p. 1329.
[452] Portes, 'Social capital', pp. 15-18.
[453] Portes, 'Social capital', pp. 15-18; Portes and Landolt, 'The downside of social capital'.

consequences of strong ties – in some detail. He highlights a body of literature that supports the frequent claims made in social capital literature regarding closed communities.

Portes has also tested Coleman's hypothesis of social capital aiding educational attainment. In a study of children from immigrant groups – Mexican, Filipinos, Chinese, and Koreans – he uses measures of social capital such as parental school involvement, family composition, and closure of parental networks. He finds strong support statistically for social capital aiding attainment, but notes that this becomes insignificant when controls are introduced for the student's age and sex, parents' socio-economic status, knowledge of English, and length of US residence.[454] Portes therefore warns of the dangers of attributing educational attainment to social capital: '[w]hile the popularity of the social capital solution in official and philanthropic circles offers a tempting prospect, it is not advisable to jump so quickly onto this bandwagon.'[455]

Portes and Landolt review recent literature on Latin American urbanisation and migration, and consider related development issues. They conclude that social capital is important but only when suitable resources (e.g. economic) are present: '[w]hen the latter are poor and scarce, the goal achievement capacity of a collectivity is restricted, no matter how strong its internal bonds.'[456] This is an interesting antidote to Ostrom, whose work on development places little emphasis on the resources possessed by the individuals involved. Portes and Landolt do believe, however, that social capital can have a role in maximising the available resources: '[w]hat social capital can do is to increase the 'yield' of such resources by reinforcing them with the voluntary efforts of participants and their monitoring capacity to prevent malfeasance.'[457]

[454] Portes, 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', pp. 7-9.
[455] Portes, 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', pp. 10.
[456] Portes and Landolt, 'Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of its Role in Development', p. 546.
[457] Portes and Landolt, 'Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of its Role in Development', p. 547.

3.2.3.3.) Summary

While latterly Portes does not seek to develop a concept of social capital *per se*, he merits attention due to his meticulous examination of the field and his criticisms of its shortcomings, as well as contributing key empirical work. Portes (with Sensenbrenner) originally appeared to be aiming to develop a concept of social capital to bridge economic and social theories, but he has latterly retreated into the role of commentator. It is in this position that he produces some of the most insightful work on the subject. He emphasises the need to keep resources separate from the access to resources in any analysis of social capital. Importantly he also highlights the difference between the lender and the recipient in the social capital transaction; he asserts that understanding the role of both is vital to fully comprehend the process, especially the motivations of the lender. Portes also cites a rich body of evidence on closed communities in the form of ethnic enclaves. This helps to demonstrate many assumptions in social capital literature about strong ties and closed communities. He has also looked empirically at social capital's relationship with educational attainment and economic development. He found little relevant correlation in the former (once controlling for other factors), but found qualified confirmation in the latter.

Portes has pleaded for coherence in work on social capital and has expressed anxiety at the broadening of its definition in the work of Coleman and Putnam. Overall, he believes that the concept is worthwhile, albeit with some qualifications: '[a]s a label for the positive effects of sociability, social capital has, in my view, a place in theory and research provided that its different sources and effects are recognized and that their downsides are examined with equal attention.'[458]

[458] Portes, 'Social capital', p. 22.

3.2.3.4.) Does Portes provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Portes has made some important contributions to work on social capital. His and Landolt's critique of the potential downsides of social capital was the first to make this observation. His analysis of closed networks in the form of ethnic enclaves, and some of the negative aspects of this, is particularly compelling. This is a key critique of Putnam's original work. In addition, Portes' challenges some of the conceptual assumptions and definitional confusion in Putnam's work. This can possibly help to bring some conceptual clarity.

3.2.4.) Foley and Edwards' promotion of a network version of social capital

Foley and Edwards evaluate the current work on social capital and also produce a revised network-based version of the concept. They are critical of those such as Putnam who measure social capital as aggregated attitudes at the macro-level, with such variables as social trust and values, but they are also wary of "over-networked" conceptions of social capital that concentrate on ties alone.[459] Foley and Edwards do not produce any empirical studies, but do make some important conceptual observations which are examined below.

3.2.4.1.) The context dependent nature of social capital

While praising Coleman's work on social capital, Foley and Edwards align themselves most closely to Bourdieu because of his consideration of wider economic factors. They believe that social capital should never be used as the dependent variable because it is so context dependent:

> ...access to social resources is neither brokered equitably nor distributed evenly, as Bourdieu's conception, alone among those canvassed here, explicitly recognizes.

[459] Foley, M. W., and Edwards, B. 1999. 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', *Journal of Public Policy.* 19 (2), 141-173. p. 163-4.

> The access required to convert social resources (the 'raw materials' of social capital) into social capital has two distinct, but necessary components – the perception that a specific resource exists and some form of social relationship that brokers individual or group access to those particular social resources.[460]

Foley and Edwards therefore caution against considering either access through networks or resources themselves as social capital on their own. For it to be considered social capital, there cannot be one without the other.

Their concept of social capital emphasises the two key components of access and resources: '[i]ndividuals or collective actors can be said to have social capital when the resources are present and accessible, in other words when they are actually available for use. Thus, social capital = resources + access.'[461] Foley, Edwards, and Diani assert that this underscores a problem with other concepts of social capital that do not fully consider the differing contexts in which networks operate: '[w]hen social capital is measured at the national level by aggregating survey responses into a "grand mean," it is impossible to distinguish the impact of localized social contexts on its generation.'[462] As part of this they believe that social capital's "use value" in each instance should be considered.

3.2.4.2.) The "use value" of social capital

Foley and Edwards assert that the value of social capital will vary from one instance to the next. This relates to Coleman's point about social capital not being fungible.[463]

They highlight the "use value" of social capital. This is dependent on two things. Firstly, on an individual's position in a network and the number of ties they have within it. Secondly, on the position of the *network itself*: 'the social location of the

[460] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 166.
[461] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 166.
[462] Foley, M.W., Edwards, B., & Diani, M. 2001. 'Social Capital Reconsidered', in Foley, M.W., Edwards, B., & Diani, M. *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective.* Hanover: University Press of New England pp. 266-280. p. 267.
[463] Coleman, J. S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 302.

entire network within the broader socio-economic context shapes the ways that specific networks can and cannot link their members to resources.'[464] This is because 'the network as a whole may be embedded in a declining sector or an oppressed constituency.'[465]

3.2.4.3.) Active and inactive social capital

Another factor highlighted by Foley and Edwards is that just because social capital is available, does not mean that it is always used. This relates to Bourdieu's definition about social capital being the *actual* or *potential resources* available through a network. Foley and Edwards therefore make a distinction between the *possession* of social capital and the *use* of social capital, and this means that: 'agency is problematized as a variable influenced by a range of factors, rather than implicitly presumed to be constant.'[466] This point, which is also developed separately by Lin (see next section), posits that while agency alone cannot always create social capital, it can be the key to making the most of it: 'specific strategic choices in the use of social capital determine actual outcomes.'[467]

3.2.4.4.) Summary

Foley and Edwards' short but insightful conceptual review of social capital favours a network approach. It does not cite the work of Lin however, whose work has much in common with some of their conclusions. They recommend that social capital should not be used as the dependent variable, because it does not have the same value in all situations. Drawing on Bourdieu's, and to a lesser extent Coleman's, version of social capital, they assert that social capital is most fruitful when considered in broader contexts. This means not just focusing on network ties but also

[464] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 165.
[465] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 166.
[466] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 168.
[467] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 168.

considering: a) what resources these network ties connect to and; b) where the network is located in the broader social structure.

3.2.4.5.) Do Foley and Edwards provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Foley and Edwards' main contribution, following Bourdieu, is to emphasise the potentially huge variations in the value of social capital because of different network locations in the broader social structure. This is part of their broader theme that social capital does not have the same value in different contexts. For example, dense associational activity that may be beneficial in America appears to have negative outcomes in Belfast and Beirut.[468] Because of this they are very dubious of macro-level research on social capital that produces grand means, which is so prevalent in Putnam's work. They believe this cannot take into account the wider context and ultimate value in each instance. Their other significant assertion is that while social structure will dictate the value of resources potentially accessible to an individual, agency has an important role in activating the resources. Therefore social capital transmission is portrayed as not being a purely passive process.

[468] Foley and Edwards, 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', p. 155.

3.3.) Lin's theory of social capital

Nan Lin is the final social capital author to be examined in this thesis. Not only does he acknowledge and examine other work on the subject, but he also attempts a synthesis of the network material. He has developed a comprehensive theory of social capital and has produced a book length monograph on the subject: *Social Capital – A Theory of Social Structure and Action.* This work recounts the development of the concept, puts it into context of capital theory, and presents Lin's own version of social capital, which builds on the work of Bourdieu, Granovetter, and Burt.

Lin has been examining social structure, networks, and social resources for over two decades, and this has culminated in a theory of social capital. How different it is in reality from his original theory of social resources will be considered later. He is keen to anchor his work on a theory of capital and to 'contribute to an understanding of capitalization processes explicitly engaging hierarchical structures, social networks, and actors.'[469] For Lin social capital is a relational concept: 'social capital [is] capital captured through social relations. In this approach, capital is seen as a social asset by virtue of actors' connections and access to resources in the network or group of which they are members.'[470] This definition is a direct descendant of Bourdieu's: social capital is seen as a type of capital and is clearly perceived as the resources accessible through network connections. Lin goes further by defining social capital with specific regard to beneficial outcomes gained from these resources:

> Access to and use of these resources is temporary and borrowed in the sense that the actor does not possess them. A friend's bicycle is one's social capital. One can use it to achieve a certain goal, but it must be returned to the friend. One implication of the use of social capital is its assumed obligation for reciprocity or compensation.[471]

[469]Lin, N. 2001. Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 3.
[470] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 19.
[471] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 56.

The differences to other versions of social capital are stark. Whereas in the above analogy Putnam may count the friendship, the outcomes and perhaps the bicycle as social capital, Lin restricts his definition strictly to resources (the bicycle).

Lin outlines three components of his theory of social capital: 1) the resources that are accessed; 2) the recognition that the resources are embedded in social structures and that actors have differential access to them; and 3) the action foundation, i.e. that the resources can be mobilised by actors for gain.[472] This latter element in particular distinguishes Lin from the other well-known versions of social capital. Lin is the author who places an emphasis on the intentional aspect of social capital, as opposed to seeing it as a by-product of other activities or the result of unconscious acts as cited by Coleman and Bourdieu respectively. While Coleman and Ostrom both believe that on certain occasions there can be direct and conscious investment in social capital, Lin is the only author to assert that it is *instrumentally pursued.* The implications of this are considered later in the chapter.

Lin's observations on the different types of capital will be looked at first. Then there will be a section that examines his theory of social capital – including his methodology – and how he has built on the work of others. This is done by clarifying the central tenets of his work on social capital, such as his perception of social structure and the action principle. There will be a brief comparison with his concept of social resources which preceded his theory of social capital and very much resembles it. Having outlined the background of his theory, his empirical work will be examined.

3.3.1.) Lin's conception of capital

Lin defines capital as the: '*investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace*. Capital is resources when these resources are invested and mobilized in pursuit of a profit – as a goal in action.'[473] Lin outlines three types of capital (other than social): the classical notion of capital (Marx); human capital; and cultural

[472] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 29
[473] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 3. Italics in the original.

capital. Some of these types, and Lin's views on them, were partially explored earlier in this chapter in relation to Bourdieu.

Lin traces the change in capital theory from the macro-analysis in Marx to the micro-analysis of neo-capital theories. He is critical of Marxist theory for perceiving capital as being generated and accumulated only by capitalists, with labourers seen as gaining nothing. For Lin, neo-capital theories have two important elements that distinguish them from the classical theory. First of all, they 'favor a microlevel explanation of how individual labourers as actors make the necessary investments in order to gain surplus value of their labor in the marketplace.'[474] Secondly, whereas in classical capital theory labourers are seen as being merely at the mercy of the whims of the bourgeoisie, in neo-capital theories the importance of action and choices of labourers are also a vital consideration. This means that in neo-capital theories:

> The image of the social structure is modified from one of dichotomized antagonistic struggle to one of layered or stratified negotiating discourses[...]The distinctive feature of these theories resides in the potential investment and capture of surplus value by the laborers or masses.[475]

This sets the background of Lin's own work in the area, which he further develops.

3.3.2.) Lin's view of other authors' work on social capital

This section looks at Lin's assessment of other material on social capital. Lin believes that social capital, which he refers to as a 'major advance in neo-capital theory',[476] extends neo-capital theory in the sense that it places even greater emphasis on the choices and actions of the individual. For him it adds another dimension to the understanding of the benefits of capital. Lin asserts that there are many different spheres that the concept can be applied to: '[t]he market chosen for

[474] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 17.
[475] Lin, N. 1999. 'Building a Network Theory of Social Capital', *Connections* 22 (1), pp. 28-51. pp. 29-30.
[476] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 19.

analysis may be economic, political, labor, or community. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits.'[477]

Lin identifies three critical components of social capital: resources; the individuals that are embedded in a social structure; and action. He contends that 'resources are at the core of all capital theories, especially social capital.'[478] He asserts that any theory of social capital should examine these three components:[479]

1) It should explain how resources take on values and how the valued resources are distributed in society – the structural embeddedness of resources.
2) It should show how individual actors, through interactions and social networks, become differentially accessible to such structurally embedded resources – the opportunity structure.
3) It should explain how access to such social resources can be mobilized for gains – the process of activation.

These three components will now each be studied in detail in order to understand Lin's theory of social capital and the key role that resources play in the theory.

3.3.2.1.) The social allocation of resources

Different values are assigned by consensus to resources by a group or community. This may be partly dependant upon their scarcity. The assignment of values can be achieved through persuasion, petition, and coercion. Overall, the value of resources may change over time. Lin identifies two types of resources that can be accessed by actors: personal and social resources. First of all, individuals have their own personal resources which they inherit, gain by their own effort, or exchange for other resources. They may possess a resource outright or only by social contract. Yet personal resources are normally limited and individuals are more likely to access resources through social connections. These social resources, like personal

[477] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 19.
[478] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 29.
[479] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 29.

resources, can include material goods such as land, houses, cars, money; and also symbolic resources such as education, family name, organisational titles, and reputation.[480]

Lin also believes that 'maintaining and gaining valued resources are the two primary motives for action, with the former outweighing the latter'.[481] The former is referred to as expressive actions and the latter as instrumental (this is considered in more detail shortly). Once the existing resources are secured by the community and individual actors, additional resources are sought.[482] This emphasis on action is important in Lin's work and will be returned to.

3.3.2.2.) The macrostructure of resources: hierarchies and social positions

Lin considers how resources are embedded in the collectivity. He outlines three structural elements that are key to his particular perspective of social capital: the nature of a social structure; the hierarchy in a social structure; and the pyramidal shape of the hierarchical structure. It is important to note Lin's overall view of each of these interconnected elements, as they lay the foundations for his later, more detailed, propositions of social capital.

3.3.2.2.1.) Social structure

Lin defines social structure as consisting of the following:

> (1) a set of social units (*positions*) that possess differential amounts of one or more types of valued resources and that (2) are hierarchically related relative to *authority* (control of and access to resources), (3) share certain *rules* and procedures in the use of resources, and (4) are entrusted to *occupants* (*agents*) who *act on* these rules and procedures.[483]

[480] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 43.
[481] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 32. The sentence was italicised in the original text.
[482] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 32-33.
[483] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 33. Emphasis in the original.

The first element involves the link between social positions and embedded resources. The resources are linked to a position and not to an individual. If the individual in the position changes, the resources will still be attached to the position. So embedded resources in a structure are distinguished from resources possessed by individuals.[484] The second element introduces hierarchy into the equation and Lin asserts that authority in the hierarchy 'is one form of power, defined as the relative control over and access to the valued resources'.[485] The third element involves the procedures and rules that guide 'how positions (and the agents) ought to act and interact relative to the use and manipulation of valued resources'.[486] The final element is the agents that occupy these positions and how they are guided by rules and procedures. The actors that occupy more privileged positions are empowered to enact the rules and procedures, and have a certain discretion over their interpretation of them.[487]

3.3.2.2.2.) Hierarchical structure

Lin outlines how social structures range from formal and hierarchical (such as firms and corporations), to voluntary associations and informal social networks, and notes that his own focus is on the former. This is a key decision that limits Lin's work somewhat. Much of the other work on social capital examines more informal social networks.

A simple formal structure is defined as a 'hierarchical structure consisting of a set of positions linked in authority (legitimately coercive) relations (command chains) over the control and use of certain valued resources.'[488] The hierarchal dimension is very important to Lin's conception. The vertical location in the structure dictates the rank order of positions in terms of access to resources. This vertical position in the hierarchy can have other benefits:

[484] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 33.
[485] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 33.
[486] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 34.
[487] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 34.
[488] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 35.

> A position higher up in the hierarchy, by definition, can exercise authority over lower positions. Just as important, the higher positions have more information about the locations of valued resources in the hierarchy – where specific types and amounts of resources are embedded.[489]

There are also lateral positions, that is to say those with authority over individuals with similar amounts of resources in a simple social structure. These horizontal linkages are important when 'collective action is geared to massing or combining available resources in the structure.'[490]

3.3.2.2.3.) The pyramid of a hierarchy

There is an assumption by Lin that there is a pyramidal hierarchy in the macrostructure of resources: 'the higher the level in the command chain, the fewer the number of positions and occupants'.[491] Those at the top not only command the most resources, but also have the best information on the location of resources within the structure. Despite the pyramidal structure, the bottom level is not as large as it once was due to industrialisation and technological advances, i.e. there are now less unskilled agricultural workers.[492]

3.3.2.3.) The action foundation

Lin defines purposive actions as instances when collectives or individuals take action to either protect existing resources (expressive action) or to gain new ones (instrumental action). It is worth briefly distinguishing between the two. Expressive action is essentially defensive where 'social capital is a means to consolidate

[489] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 35.
[490] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 36.
[491] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 36.
[492] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 36.

resources and to defend against possible losses'.[493] This is occurs in closed networks, like those outlined by Coleman, Ostrom, and Bourdieu:

> Maintaining one's resources requires recognition by other of one's legitimacy in claiming property rights to these resources or sharing one's sentiments. The action, of course, can be seen as instrumental in that ego has a goal in acting – to solicit sentiment and support. However, the expected response is primarily expressive: acknowledging ego's property rights or sharing ego's sentiment. There is no action required beyond this public recognition and acknowledgment of others.[494]

This recognition between similar people is reminiscent of Bourdieu's work on cultural capital. Lin describes instrumental action, on the other hand, as reaching out beyond an individual's immediate circle:[495]

> ...it is assumed that the motive to seek and gain additional valued resources primarily evokes *instrumental action*, which hopes to trigger actions and reactions from others leading to more allocation of resources to ego. Thus, the action can be seen as a means to achieve a goal: to produce a profit (added resources).[496]

Lin notes how there are expressive elements in this because 'alter must have sentiment for ego to take action on ego's behalf', although action is still needed on alter's part in this process.[497] Lin concentrates on instrumental action in his study of social capital, although he recognises the value of expressive action.[498]

The action foundation is a distinctive part of Lin's theory. He asserts that none of the other social capital authors have dealt with it overtly: '[w]hile these theorists hint at the action aspect, it remains implicit in their theories rather than being the focal point or the driving element. The theory of social capital offered here

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[493] Lin, N. 2001. 'Building a Network Theory of Social Capital', in Lin, N., Cook, K., and Burt, R. S. *Social Capital: Theory and Research.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter. pp. 3-29. p. 19.
[494] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 45.
[495] Lin, 'Building a Network Theory of Social Capital' (2001), p. 19.
[496] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 46.
[497] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 46.
[498] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. xii & p. 46.

and elsewhere makes this action aspect more explicit'.[499] Lin contends that he has brought action to the fore and that by making 'explicit the hints of purposive action suggested by Granovetter and Burt, the theory of social capital gives primacy to the propensity to act in order to gain access and mobilize better social resources.'[500] This purported awareness by the individual of the benefits of social capital is in contrast to the notion of social capital as mainly a by-product of other activities, often produced unconsciously, as expressed elsewhere in this thesis (i.e. Coleman, Ostrom, and Bourdieu), and thus is a major departure. This is also indicative of how Lin's theory of social capital is very much a rational choice theory, with the emphasis on individual gain. This is particularly apparent in two chapters included in the "Conceptual Extensions" part of *Social Capital*,[501] but it is also noticeable throughout his theory of social capital. For example, he highlights what he sees as the fundamental motives of rational action, minimising loss and maximising gain, as part of the "action foundation".[502]

3.3.2.3.1.) Homophilous versus heterophilous interaction

As part of the action foundation Lin believes that the success of action is aided by the type of person an individual is connected to. As part of this, Lin distinguishes between homophilous and heterophilous interaction. Interestingly, elements of this notion are similar to the ideas of the strength of weak ties (Granovetter) and bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam). Homophilous relations are those between two actors with similar characteristics, backgrounds and resources; heterophilous interaction is between two actors from dissimilar backgrounds with dissimilar resources. The former type of interaction tends to prevail as interaction tends to occur between people with similar lifestyles and socioeconomic characteristics.[503] As McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook note: '[t]he pervasive fact of homophily

[499] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 53.
[500] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 53.
[501] See Chapter 8 'Social Capital and the Emergence of Social Structure: A Theory of Rational Choice', Lin, *Social capital*, pp. 127-142; and Chapter 9 'Reputation and Social Capital: The Rational Basis for Social Exchange', Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 143-164.
[502] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 41-54.
[503] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 39.

means that cultural, behavioral, genetic, or material information that flows through networks will tend to be localized.'[504] The concept of homophily in its modern context is generally traced back to Lazarsfeld and Merton.[505] Bourdieu's work, of course, very much looks at homophilous relations within closed networks.

Lin asserts that actors access social capital 'to promote purposive actions.'[506] With homophilous interaction, expressive action can produce high returns with low effort. This is because the agents' resources will be similar, therefore there will be greater motivation to protect them. This is in contrast to achieving instrumental action with homophilous interaction which, while also requiring low effort, is likely to bring low returns, because there is little incentive to gain similar resources to those that are already possessed.[507]

Heterophilous interaction needs more effort as there is usually a resource-richer partner and a resource-poorer partner in the interaction, with potentially little shared sentiments between them. In heterophilous interactions, expressive action would require high effort and only has the potential for low returns. Yet achieving instrumental action with heterophilous interactions, while also requiring high effort, can potentially offer high gains. This is because it can offer access to resources different to, and potentially more valuable than, an agent's own.[508] This generally means that actors need to connect to someone with better resources who occupies a higher hierarchical position than themselves.[509]

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[504] McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., and Cook, J. M. 2001. ' Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks', *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 pp. 415-44. p. 416.
[505] Lazarsfeld, P. F., and Merton, R.K. 1954. 'Friendship as a social process: a substantive and methodological analysis', in Berger, M (ed) *Freedom and Control in Modern Society.* New York: Van Nostrand, pp. 18-66.
[506] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 48. The words were italicised in the original.
[507] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 48.
[508] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 48.
[509] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 50.

3.3.3.) The similarities between social capital theory and social resources theory

Lin's original work in this area used the term 'social resources' and it was only later (in 1995) that he deployed the term social capital.[510] In a 1981 article Lin differentiated between personal and social resources, and defined social resources as: '[t]he wealth, status, and power, as well as the social ties, of these persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual and who, therefore comprise his social network, are considered potential social resources for the individual.'[511] These are the same factors that Lin's theory of social capital looks at. Lin's theory of social resources is therefore his theory of social capital in an embryonic form, a theory which also attempts to integrate the strength of ties literature with the homophily principle.[512] Lin and co-authors assert that the concept of social resources 'encompasses two components: social relations and the resources embedded in positions reached through such relations.'[513] It is interesting that Lin's social resources theory is more loosely defined than his notion of social capital, and is almost Putnamesque in its mixing of resources and the networks that provide access to these resources, in its definition. He added the notion of the pyramidal structure – the key vertical dimension – to his theory of social resources in 1982.[514] Lin's concept of social capital built upon his work on social resources by emphasising *action* and focusing on how *resources are mobilised for gains*.

In the late 1980s some authors referring to the concept of social resources started to use the term interchangeably with the term social capital. For example, Marsden and Hurlbert use the term social capital in inverted commas as an

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[510] See Lin, N. 1995. 'Les Resources Sociales: Une Theorie Du Capital Social', *Revue Francaise de Sociologie* XXXVI (4), pp. 685-704. Lin acknowledges this as his first use of the term social capital in Lin, N. 1999. 'Social Networks and Status Attainment', *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, pp. 467-87. p. 471.

[511] Lin, N., Vaughn, J. C., and Ensel, W. M. 1981. 'Social resources and occupational status attainment', *Social Forces* 59 (4), pp. 1163-1181. p. 393.

[512] Lin, N., Ensel, W. M. and Vaughn, J. C., 1981. 'Social resources and strength of ties: Structural factors in occupational status attainment', *American Sociological Review* 46, pp. 393-405. p. 396.

[513] Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn, 1981. 'Social resources and strength of ties', p. 395.

[514] Lin, 'Social Resources and Instrumental Action', p. 132.

alternative expression for social resources when discussing Lin's theory.[515] The term social capital was originally deployed in this context by DiMaggio and Mohr. They appear to be the first commentators to make the connection between Lin's theory of social resources and Bourdieu's theory of social capital, in a 1985 article.[516] They suggest that both concepts look at the same phenomena, although, as noted earlier, Lin himself would not make the connection for another decade. The first use of the term social capital by network authors about their *own* work appears to be by Flap and De Graaf in 1986.[517] Of the network authors studied in this thesis Burt was the first to use the term social capital, in *Structural Holes* in 1992.

Lin, however, distinguishes between the theories of social resources and social capital. He outlines how the two parallel but independent notions merged and believes that this was a positive development:

> The convergence of the social resources and social capital theories complements and strengthens the development of a social theory focusing on the instrumental utility of accessed and mobilized resources embedded in social networks. It places the significance of social resources in the broader theoretical discussion of social capital and sharpens the definition and operationality of social capital as a research concept.[518]

It is interesting that Lin sees social resources as *part* of social capital theory. Ultimately he believes that it can provide a measure of social capital: '[a]t the empirical and research levels, social resources are used; at the general theoretical level, social capital is employed.'[519] Three of the seven social capital propositions (that will be discussed later) are the same as the original three propositions of Lin's theory of social resources.[520]

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[515] Marsden, P. V., and Hurlbert, J. S. 1988. 'Social Resources and Mobility Outcomes: A Replication and Extension', *Social Resources* 66 (4), pp. 1038-1059. p. 1039.
[516] DiMaggio, P., and Mohr. 1985. 'Cultural Capital, Educational Attainment, and Marital Selection', *The American Journal of Sociology.* 90 (6), pp. 1231-1261. p. 1256.
[517] Flap, H. D, and De Graaf N. D. 1986. 'Social Capital and Attained Occupational Status', *Netherlands' Journal of Sociology* 22, pp. 145-161.
[518] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 81-2.
[519] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 82.
[520] See Lin, 'Social Resources and Instrumental Action', pp. 132-135.

While social resources theory resembles social capital theory to a large extent, Lin clearly demonstrates that they are distinct and that the former theory is a composite part of the latter. His theory of social capital is much clearer definitionally than his theory of social resources and makes the key separation between resources and the access to resources. Lin believes the term capital is appropriate because social capital is placed so firmly in the context of theories of capital in general. Flap also believes that social capital is the more appropriate term in this context: '[c]ompared to 'social resources' the term 'social capital' more clearly expresses that people's actions can also be seen as investment decisions and that persons occasionally invest in other people.'[521]

With the addition of the action foundation, social capital is very much more a theory of rational choice than the theory of social resources was. It is interesting to note that Coleman cites Lin's theory of social resources as influencing his own concept of social capital (which predated Lin's re-branding of social resources as social capital).[522]

3.3.4.) Testing Lin's propositions

Lin puts forward seven propositions of social capital. They bring together the various strands of his theory and specifically link social capital to action. They are listed below:

1) The social capital proposition: The success of action is positively associated with social capital;
2) The strength of position proposition: The better the position of origin, the more likely the actor will access and use social capital;
3) The strength of strong ties proposition: The stronger the tie, the more likely that the social capital accessed will positively affect the success of expressive action;

[521] Flap, H. D. 1991. 'Social Capital in the Reproduction of Inequality, A Review', *Comparative Sociology of Family, Health and Education* 20, pp. 6179-202. pp. 6182-83.
[522] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 302.

4) The strength of weak ties proposition: The weaker the tie, the more likely an agent will have access to better social capital for instrumental action;
5) The strength of location proposition: The closer individuals are to a bridge in a network, the better social capital they access for instrumental action;
6) The location by position proposition: The strength of a location (in proximity to a bridge), for instrumental action, is contingent on the resource differential across the bridge;
7) The structural contingency proposition: Networking (tie and location) effects are constrained by the hierarchical structure for actors located near or at the top or at the bottom of the hierarchy.

The first proposition is that access to, and use of, social capital leads to more successful action. This is the primary proposition of Lin's theory and he suggests that if it cannot be verified in research, all of the following six propositions become irrelevant. This is the core of Lin's theory, i.e. that accessible resources are used by agents to achieve positive outcomes.

Lin cites thirty-one studies that investigate four of the propositions. The propositions that have been tested are: 1) The social resources effect – the way social resources exert influence on instrumental action; 2) The strength of position proposition – that social resources are affected by the position of ego; 3) The strength of strong ties proposition and; 4) The strength of weak ties proposition (note that the tie effect, both strong and weak, are summarised under one heading in the table below).

The studies Lin cites look specifically at social capital and status attainment, in this case obtaining a better job. Lin outlines two models that examine this. Firstly there is the *accessed social capital model.* This refers to resources that are accessed in an individual's general social networks. Secondly there is the *mobilized social capital model*, which focuses on the status of the contacts that are utilised by an individual to achieve a certain level of attainment. Lin himself concentrates on the latter. He asserts that both look at different parts of the same process. While accessed social capital refers to resources that can be *potentially* accessed, it does not necessarily follow that every individual will successfully *mobilise* them.

Therefore the mobilized social capital model focuses on instances where action has occurred to make use of an individual's access to resources: 'not all persons accessed with rich social capital are expected to take advantage of or be able to mobilize social capital for the purpose of obtaining better socio-economic status. An element of action and choice should also be significant.'[523] This is similar to Foley and Edwards view discussed earlier and it addresses the issue of latent social capital, the 'potential resources' mentioned by Bourdieu.

Two of the methods for mapping networks used in some of the studies are name-generators and position-generators. Name-generators seek to ascertain information about an agent's contacts in role relationships, content areas, and intimacy. The social capital measures in this work reflect the contact's diversity and range of resources, such as education and occupation, and characteristics, such as gender, race and age. Position-generators are a more recent method that was developed by Lin and Dumin in the mid-1980s.[524] It concentrates on key structural positions (political employment etc), and respondents have to indicate those people that they know, if any, on a first name basis in each position. Instead of emphasising individuals like the name generator, the position generator focuses on the positions in networks.

Lin's summary of the studies is reproduced in the table below, which records the dates and the country of each study.[525] Lin notes whether or not studies confirm the three propositions of social capital being examined.

[523] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 92.
[524] Lin, N. and Dumin, M. 1986. 'Access to Occupations Through Social Ties', *Social Networks* 8, pp. 365-385.
[525] Table adapted from Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 84. All of the works are fully referenced in the bibliography.

Table 3.1.) Summary of studies and findings on social capital and status attainment

Study	Social Resources Effect	Position Effect	Tie effect
Mobilized social capital model			
Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn (1981, USA)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marsden and Hurlbert (1988, USA)	Yes	Yes	No
Ensel (1979, USA)	Yes	-	-
DeGraaf and Flap (1988, the Netherlands)	Yes	-	-
Moerbeek, Utle, and Flap (1995, the Netherlands)	Yes	Yes	-
Wegener (1991, Germany)	Yes	-	-
Requena (1991, Spain)	No	-	-
Barbieri (1996, Italy)	Yes	Yes	No
Hsung and Sun (1988, Taiwan)	Yes	-	-
Hsung and Hwang (1992, Taiwan)	Yes	Yes	No
Bian and Ang (1997, Singapore)	Yes	-	Yes*
Volker and Flap (1999, East Germany)	Yes	Yes*	No
Bian (1997, China)	Yes	-	No
Accessed social capital model			
Name generator methodology			
Campbell, Marsden, and Hurlbert (1986, USA)	Yes	-	-
Sprengers, Tazelaar, and Flap (1988, the Netherlands)	Yes	Yes	Yes*
Barbieri (1996, Italy)	Yes	Yes	-
Boxman, DeGraaf, and Flap (1991, the Netherlands)	Yes	-	-
Boxman and Flap (1990, The Netherlands)	Yes	-	-
Burt (1992, USA)	Yes	-	-
Burt (1997, 1998 USA)	Yes*	-	-
Position Generator Methodology			
Lin and Dumin (1986, USA)	Yes	Yes	Yes*
Hsung and Hwang (1992, Taiwan)	Yes	-	-
Volker and Flap (1999, East Germany)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Angelusz and Tardos (1991, Hungary)	Yes	No	-
Erickson (1995, 1996, Canada)	Yes	-	Yes*
Erickson (1998, Canada)	Yes	-	-
Belliveau, O'Reilly, and Wade (1996, USA)	Yes	-	-
Joint accessed/mobilized model			
Boxman (1992, the Netherlands)	Yes	-	-
Flap and Boxman (1996, 1998, the Netherlands)	Yes	-	-
Volker and Flap (1997, Germany)	Yes	-	-
Lai, Lin, and Leung (1998, USA)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key: - = not reported; * = Conditional confirmation.

All thirty-one studies look at the social resources effect and only one finds that it does not have an effect, and another only provides conditional confirmation. This provides strong endorsement of the Lin's primary social capital proposition. Twelve of the studies also look at the position effects, ten confirm it, but one of these was only conditional confirmation, and one does not find the effect. Twelve also look at the tie effect, seven provide confirmation, four of which are conditional, and five do not.[526]

3.3.4.1.) Summary of the empirical studies looking at social capital

The studies are interesting and appear to, on the whole, confirm two of Lin's propositions resoundingly and the other two less emphatically. This does not in itself confirm the theory of social capital, and much of the data predates the theory, but it does seemingly confirm a few of the propositions. Vitally, all but two provide unconditional confirmation of Lin's primary social capital proposition. For Lin this is an important vindication of the utility of social capital: '[r]esearch has provided consistent support for the proposition that social capital, in the form of social resources, makes a significant contribution to status attainment beyond personal resources.'[527] Lin goes onto assert that – due to the variety of locations and methodologies employed in the studies – this association persists across societies, industrialisation and development levels, labour market populations, different economic sectors, status outcomes, and types of measurements.[528]

The flaw in citing the various empirical works above, as often is the case in material on social capital, is the use of a proxy measure for social capital. Lin states in the above passage: 'social capital, in the form of social resources'. It has already been noted that he seeks to use social capital conceptually and social resources in his empirical work. Yet it is difficult to see how empirical confirmation of the power of social resources can confirm the theory of social capital any more than partially.

[526] See Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 84.
[527] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 93.
[528] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 93.

3.3.5.) The rise of cybernetworks: Lin's analysis of Putnam's 'Bowling Alone' hypothesis

Lin does attempt one macro-analysis of social capital in a brief consideration of Putnam's American hypothesis (as formulated in Putnam's original article 'Bowling Alone', as opposed to the later book). Lin first of all asserts that '[w]hether social capital is rising or declining largely depends on how it is defined and measured'.[529] He rejects the use of membership in associations and trust as surrogate measures of social capital. This is because he believes that they have not yet been theoretically justified as measures of social capital, thus dismissing much of the work in the area: 'none of the studies carried out so far clearly employ the notion that social capital is reflected in the investment and mobilization of embedded resources in social networks.'[530] Using this criteria, Lin asserts that social capital can exist (for example) in the form of cybernetworks. Cybernetworks are on the increase in many parts of the world and he believes that they transcend community and national boundaries, and that they can be used as an indicator of social capital.[531]

Lin defines cybernetworks as 'the social networks in cyberspace, and specifically on the Internet.'[532] These can be formed by individuals or formal and informal organisations 'for the purpose of exchanges, including resource transactions and relations reinforcement.'[533] Use of the internet has mushroomed in the last ten years, and Lin believes that this has resulted in an increase in social capital and that this has been beneficial: '[a]ccess to information in conjunction with interactive facilities makes cybernetworks not only rich in social capital, but also an important investment for participants' purposive actions in both the production and consumption markets.'[534]

Lin believes that although there is currently an inequality of access to the internet, there is a 'possibility of a bottom-up globalization process whereby

[529] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 211.
[530] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 211.
[531] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 212.
[532] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 212. The sentence was italicised in the original.
[533] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 212.
[534] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 215.

entrepreneurship and group formations become viable without the dominance of any particular class of actors'.[535] He outlines the reasons why this might be:

> ....cybernetworks represent a new era of democratic and entrepreneur networks and relations in which resources flow and are shared by a large number of participants with new rules and practices, many of which are devoid of colonial intent or capability.'[536]

Yet while Lin criticises Putnam for using associations and trust as measures in 'Bowling Alone',[537] Lin's own measure is rather tenuous. The resources cybernetworks carry tend to be limited to information. However, Lin believes this is social capital because it can be used for other purposes:

> Cybernetworks provide social capital in the sense that they carry resources that go beyond mere information purposes. E-commerce is a case in point. Many sites offer free information, but they carry advertisements presumably enticing the user to purchase certain merchandise or services. They also provide incentives to motivate users to take actions.[538]

Yet this hardly resembles social capital as outlined by Lin conceptually. For instance, there is no hierarchal structure, which is so central to his conception.

For Lin, access to the internet is a major problem with equality, however. He outlines the vast differences in households with email in America by income, ethnicity, education, and region.[539] Yet, he believes that the current inequality of access is due to existing social, economic, and political factors, opposed to the nature of cybernetworks themselves.[540] He asserts that the rise of the internet has had both positive and negative outcomes:

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[535] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 215.
[536] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 215.
[537] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 211.
[538] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 215.
[539] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 229-34.
[540] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 216.

> ...it has brought about a further unequal distribution of capital among societies and individuals. The paradox is that while the revolution widens the divide between those who gain access to more and richer capital and others who are being shut out of such opportunities and benefits, those in the cybernetworks have seen an equalization of opportunities and benefits as wide-open competition and channels reduce power, and thus capital differentials, among groups and individuals.[541]

The implication is that while cybernetworks can bring equality, existing inequality can deny access and gives the privileged yet another resource that is unavailable to others. In fact, Norris believes that it may further exacerbate the global divide between North and South: 'despite its capacity for development, without adequate action by government, non-profits and the corporate sector, the global information gap is likely to widen the North-South divide.'[542]

While traditional interpersonal networks may be declining, Lin believes that this has to be offset against the rise of the cybernetworks and that this is the 'beginning of a new era in which social capital is far outpacing personal capital in significance and effect.'[543] Lin asserts that the hypothesis that social capital is declining is 'obviously premature and, in fact, false.'[544] He also asserts that the rise of the internet has caused a decline in television viewing.[545]

It has to be noted, however, that Lin's work predates the book *Bowling Alone* where Putnam modifies his hypothesis and downplays the importance of television in causing the decline of social capital in America, and also states that the rise of the internet is one of several counter-trends to the general decline in engagement in America.[546]

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[541] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 238.
[542] Norris, P. 2000. 'The Worldwide Digital Divide: Information Poverty, the Internet and Development', Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Political Studies Association at LSE 10-13 April, pp. 1-10. p. 5. See also Norris, P. 2001. *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[543] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 216.
[544] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 237.
[545] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 237-8.
[546] See Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Chapter nine.

3.3.5.1.) Summary of the study of cybernetworks

Cybernetworks may well be a new and more egalitarian form of access to social capital, but at this stage it is difficult to be certain that this can replace social capital lost due to the decline of face-to-face interaction, and Lin offers little empirical evidence of them doing so. Nor does he address Putnam's compelling case for the decline of social capital in America in its entirety. The study is in stark contrast with much of Lin's other work on social capital, which does not concern itself with social capital on a macro-scale and usually emphasises the importance of hierarchal structures and the value of the resources accessed in specific contexts. While Lin does note that internet access is dictated by various demographic factors and that it has helped to exacerbate inequality, he believes that once access is obtained there is a relative equality of opportunity. Yet just because an individual has internet access does not mean that they necessarily participate in cybernetworks.

Cybernetworks certainly merit further social capital research in the future in order to evaluate the implications of this new form of interaction. Yet despite his criticism of Putnam, Lin indulges in Putnamesque generalisations and speculations in this rare foray into considering national patterns of social capital.

3.3.6.) What Lin's work can offer Putnam's concept of social capital

Apart from his uncharacteristic work on cybernetworks, Lin focuses on small networks and the status of individuals within them. He uses various methods, such as the position generator, to measure the value of positions in a network. He also places his theory in the context of other work on social capital and work on capital in general. Lin incorporates the ideas and insights of other authors in his theory, which has been developed (originally under the term social resources) over twenty years. With his emphasis on pyramidal structures, Lin highlights the importance of the value of the resources possessed by individuals and the effect of economic background on networks. In addition, he looks at the inequality of social capital. He

also highlights the role of instrumental action, a departure from the standard perception of social capital mainly as a by-product.

How he addresses the six issues raised by Putnam's work is considered below.

3.3.6.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

Lin is the only major author who seeks to develop a *theory* of social capital. He places this within a social structural conceptual framework. He highlights the role of economic inequality by noting that those with an economically-poor point of origin are at a disadvantage. This contextualises social capital in the broader social structure and means that social capital is just one part of a broader view of social relations and hierarchal positions of individuals in the social structure. Lin also emphasises the importance of instrumental action in his "action foundation", a key tenet of his theory, as a way of activating resources (see point 3.3.7.3.).

3.3.6.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

Lin identifies two perspectives in social capital research which look at different levels at which returns are captured: the individual level and the group level. In the first perspective, the focus is on individuals either using social capital to gain returns with instrumental actions (e.g. finding a better job); or to preserve resources with expressive actions. It is a relational concept and looks at how non-financial investments of individuals can bring returns (similar to the notion of human capital in this regard). Lin identifies himself with this perspective. The other perspective looks at groups (which includes Coleman and Ostrom, although Coleman looked at both levels, as well as the work of Bourdieu). While individuals feature in this perspective, the central interest 'is to explore the elements and processes in the production and maintenance of the collective asset.'[547]

[547] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 22.

3.3.6.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

Lin (and his various co-authors) believe that it is crucial to examine the relationship between structure and action: 'a social capital theory must contain and demonstrate the meso-micro linkage and the dynamic interactive effects between structure and action.'[548] By examining social capital, Lin hopes to fill some of the gaps in previous theories of capital:

> This theory, and its research enterprise, argue that social capital is best understood by examining the mechanisms and processes by which embedded resources in social networks are captured as investment. It is these mechanisms and processes that help bridge the conceptual gap in the understanding of the macro-micro linkage between structure and individuals.[549]

Therefore Lin uses social capital as a way to combine considerations of structure and agency. Lin is partly successful in achieving what Coleman and Ostrom also set out to do in producing a theory of rational/collective action that balances concerns of structure and agency. Yet his notion that instrumental action is driving the process somewhat tips his theory to more of an agency-based perspective (see point 3.3.7.6. below).

3.3.6.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

Lin believes that social capital can have various benefits for the individual, most notably social mobility. Lin's perception is almost entirely instrumental, and focuses on those (in the middle of the hierarchy within the social structure) that have the potential for upward movement. The negative aspect of social capital for Lin is that

[548] Lin, N., Fu, Y., and Hsung, R. 2001. 'The Position Generator: Measurement Techniques for Investigations of Social Capital' in Lin, Cook, and Burt, *Social Capital: Theory and Research*, pp. 57-81. p. 61.
[549] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 3.

many individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are unable to achieve such movement, and are stranded at the bottom of the social structure.

3.3.6.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

Lin's account of tie strength, bridges, and heterophilous relations is very comprehensive. He recognises the division between strong and weak ties, and produces one of the most sophisticated accounts of weak ties (incorporating the work of Granovetter and Burt) as part of his analysis of heterophilous relations. He asserts that expressive action is more likely to be successful through strong ties, but is only likely to yield similar resources. Instrumental action through weak ties is less likely to succeed but is much more valuable if it does so, because it provides links to different and possibly better resources.

3.3.6.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

Lin believes that the use of social capital is often an intentional and instrumental process, which marks him out from other social capital authors. The fact that resources in networks can be utilised in instrumental and expressive actions is a key part of his hypothesis. While this bears some resemblance to parts of Coleman's and Ostrom's work, they tend to emphasise social capital more as a by-product rather than being *consciously* pursued.

Lin's view of social activity almost exclusively in terms of instrumental action is rather unconvincing. He does not consider less formal interaction, such as friendship, in any detail. Lin implies that individuals do not form relationships for their perceived intrinsic value, rather for the potential gain. This emanates from his focus on formal relationships (e.g. work-based) where more instrumental factors (e.g. improving career progression) come into play. It is a significant departure from the notion of social capital being unconsciously created.

3.3.6.7.) Does this version of social capital provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

Lin's attempt to start a process of systematically building a theory of social capital has something to offer Putnam. Lin concentrates mainly on the micro-level and contextualises social capital in broader structures of networks, hierarchy, and wealth. While he makes an effort to balance considerations of structure and agency, Lin tends to emphasise the latter. He highlights that social capital can be positive (social mobility) and negative (exclusion), but perhaps more importantly that it can vary in value depending on the economic resources of those involved. Therefore those with connections to wealthy individuals will potentially have more prestigious social capital than the economically disadvantaged.

It is Lin's conceptual development of not only weak ties, but also heterophilous relations (which are similar to bridging social capital) that has the most to offer Putnam's work. This contextualises weak ties in a broader process, noting that it is not *the tie itself* rather *what the tie connects to* that is the important matter to consider. Lin's theory takes this one step further by identifying social capital specifically as a resource that can be used to achieve something and that the *value of the resource* being accessed will ultimately dictate the value of the social capital.

Where Lin's theory falls short, and is particularly inappropriate for Putnam's work, is the emphasis on social capital's instrumental aspect. There is little acknowledgement of social relations being formed for intrinsic and non-instrumental reasons, with social capital being a by-product of these activities. Rather social capital is seen as something that is more intentionally and strategically pursued by individuals. Connected to this, Lin also concentrates on formal networks, ignoring the informal interaction that features in other versions of social capital.

3.4.) The possible consensus on a network concept of social capital

While there have been varying degrees of interaction between different proponents of social capital over the last twenty years, none have been as visible and productive as that of the network authors. For example, a book was published in 1982 entitled *Social Structure and Network Analysis* contains articles by Lin, Granovetter, and Burt, in addition to other writers who would become social capital authors such as Marsden and Erickson. Nowhere in the volume is social capital mentioned by name, but all the key components of the network version of social capital are featured. It is the start of an active research paradigm that still exists today.

Whether the network authors' later adoption of the term social capital was purely opportunistic is debatable but it had yet to be popularised by Putnam or even Coleman when it was first coined by some network authors in the mid-1980s. Yet Warde and Tampubolon are slightly cynical about this point: '[i]n the past, the network approach operated independently of debates about social capital, and it was only the popularity of the latter concept in the 1990s that produced some apparent convergence of interest.'[550] It has been demonstrated in this chapter that some network authors have been using the term social capital in this context for twenty years. Foley and Edwards note that at two conferences on social capital of network researchers in the late 1990s '[b]oth conferences evidenced the presumption that network analysts had been talking about social capital for years and now large sectors of the academic world had finally caught on.'[551] Borgatti and Foster suggest that, in terms of the volume of material at least, the relationship has been beneficial in both directions: '[p]robably the biggest growth area in organizational network research is social capital, a concept that has symbiotically returned the favor and helped to fuel interest in social networks.'[552] The shift towards analysis of networks in conceptualisations of social capital in general will be considered in Chapter Four.

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[550] Warde and Tampubolon, 'Social Capital, Networks and Leisure Consumption', p. 177.
[551] Foley and Edwards, *Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?*, p. 164.
[552] Borgatti, S. P., and Foster, P. C. 2003. 'The Network Paradigm in Organizational Research: A Review and Typology', *Journal of Management* 29 (6), pp. 991-1013. p. 993.

The true level of Bourdieu's influence on the contemporary network version of social capital is not easy to ascertain. While many note his definition of social capital, their actual conceptualisations do not follow his model closely. This is perhaps because of his emphasis on class groupings at the expense of more diverse network considerations. Erickson criticises the lack of personal networks and work relationships in *Distinction*. She asserts that *in effect* Bourdieu only considers two types of capital in his general work as social capital is not utilised at any length.[553] Yet while most subsequent network social capital authors focus on networks rather than more rigid class based models, Bourdieu's legacy is that he highlighted the importance of social structure and that he conceptualised social capital in the context of *capital*. This means that the relationship with other types of capital, most importantly economic, is never lost sight of. Portes notes this interrelation:

> Bourdieu's key insight was that forms of capital are fungible, that is they can be traded for each other and actually require such trades for their development. Social capital of any significance can seldom be acquired, for example, without the investment of some material resources and the possession of some cultural knowledge, enabling the individual to establish relations with others.[554]

Network authors tend to use Bourdieu's work as an initial conceptual foundation for their material on social capital, while their methodologies tend to be derived from the social resources literature.

The focus on resources, originating with Bourdieu, is a major part of the network authors' conception. Bottero notes that by focusing on resources and using stratification theory, the network authors highlight inequality and the potentially reinforcing negative effects of social capital:

> For network theorists of stratification, the value of the social capital that any individual possesses depends not only on the size and density of their networks but

[553] Erickson, B. H. 1996. 'Culture, Class, and Connections', *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (1), pp. 217-251. p. 218.
[554] Portes, 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', p. 2.

> also on the *level of resources* that such contacts can access. Because of the impact of social similarity on networks, social capital tends to act as a conservative force, reproducing inequalities.[555]

Bottero's point is vital in understanding that the value of social capital in essence reflects and reinforces existing economic inequalities. This is because the prevalence of homophilous actions means that resources being accessed will normally be similar to an individual's own. Therefore network authors provide essential context to their version of social capital, which is absent in other conceptions.

The network authors do differ in certain aspects of their concepts/theory of social capital and in their methodologies, and do not present a joint research enterprise. Yet Lin asserts that there is a consensus between them and that they have a very distinctive notion of social capital:

> ...there is a converging consensus (Portes, Burt, Lin) that social capital, as a theory-generating concept, should be conceived in the social network context: as resources accessible through social ties that occupy strategic network locations (Burt) and/or significant organizational positions (Lin).[556]

While there has been no joint statement between these authors, Lin asserts that the shared conceptualisation is as follows:

> ...social capital may be defined operationally as the *resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions*. Thus, the concept has two important components: (1) it represents resources embedded in social relations rather than individuals, and (2) access and use of such resources reside with actors.[557]

He goes on to differentiate between this group of authors and those that look at social capital as a collective good: '[d]ivorced from its roots in individual

[555] Bottero, W. 2005. *Stratification: Social division and inequality.* London: Routledge. p. 182.
[556] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 24.
[557] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 24-5.

interactions and networking, social capital becomes merely another trendy term to employ or deploy in the broad context of improving or building social integration and solidarity'.[558] Yet this is an approach he takes himself in his brief (and weak) study on cybernetworks and engagement.

Foley and Edwards also agree with many facets of the network version – although they are cautious of "over networked" versions that concentrate solely on ties[559] – but do not seem aware of Lin's work. It is interesting that Lin makes the claim that there is a consensus between network authors. The convergence of interest does not mean, however, that Burt and Portes have publicly endorsed all facets of Lin's conceptualisation. Yet Lin's incorporation of the other authors' material in his work benefits his theory. The use of Granovetter's work, for example, is much more judicious than Putnam's, where the strength of weak ties hypothesis is not conceptually explored in any great detail.

[558] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 26.
[559] Foley and Edwards, *Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?*, p. 164.

3.5.) Summary of the Network approach to social capital

Network versions of social capital were developed entirely separately from those of Putnam, Coleman and Ostrom. Many network authors take the position that the concept/theory is yet to be definitively confirmed empirically. For example, Portes, and to a lesser extent Lin, emphasise the *provisional* nature of the concept/theory; i.e. that a series of hypothesises should be subjected to empirical investigation and these may well disprove the utility of the concept/theory. Disappointingly this has not so far resulted in the authors dedicating much time to this task, rather there has been more material examining issues in conjunction with the "provisional" concept/theory, rather than testing the concept/theory itself. There is, however, frequent examination and testing of the underlying elements of the concept/theory (such as the strength of ties proposition). Microanalysis makes it easier to relate the empirical material to elements of the concept/theory, which is not overstretched with macro-considerations, such as looking at the aggregated mean of social capital in nations.

In this chapter the two major authors featured are Bourdieu and Lin. It is worth further evaluating their work here briefly. Even though Bourdieu's concept of social capital is potentially insightful, parts of it are problematic. For example, while there are cursory examinations of examples of social capital, such as families and titles of nobility, no systematic research is offered. He also focuses on closed networks and does not consider whether weak ties can provide social capital.

Despite providing some clarity by highlighting resources as social capital, Bourdieu still has some conceptual ambiguity. For example, he writes that social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources available, but does not consider the implications of the difference between whether they are *actual* or only *potential* resources. Nor does he expand greatly upon how durable the network needs to be or if the relationships actually need to be institutionalised. In addition, he writes of "collectively-owned" capital, but again this ownership is not accounted for in detail. Warde and Tampuolon believe that Bourdieu's notion of social capital relies too heavily on direct analogy with financial capital: '[i]t seems that the

analogy would require that all social capital was positive, that it was always complementary, and that it appeared in some uniform unit.'[560]

Although Bourdieu does not claim to be a major social capital author, it is unfortunate that he does not develop his promising work on the subject. The reasons for not doing this are unclear, but it appears that social capital is certainly not as important to his work as his concept of cultural capital when the space devoted to the two are compared. In fact, social capital appears to be essentially an appendage to his concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu is also perhaps guilty of indulging in the creation of a plethora of conceptions of capitals while only properly articulating a concept of cultural capital (and its relationship with economic capital).

Lin's work on social capital is quite comprehensive and clearly focused. The range of relevant empirical studies that he cites in relation to some of his social capital propositions is compelling. Unfortunately, while Lin outlines seven propositions of social capital, which are commendably concise, he only tests four empirically in a systematic manner. He has a primary proposition of social capital (that the success of action is positively associated with social capital) and finds confirmation of this primary proposition in a multitude of studies. Yet this proposition very much embodies his notion of the action foundation, for it is formulated in relation to status attainment. This is again indicative of Lin defining social capital in terms of instrumental action. Lin's other case-studies are rather eclectic, and his brief study of declining social capital in America (looking at cybernetworks) is particularly unfocused and unsystematic.

While it can hardly be asserted that the network authors present a unified version of social capital, there is certainly evidence of an active research paradigm. Many different authors contribute to the conception that culminated in Lin's theory, which is an amalgamation of various work from the last two decades. Bourdieu's valuable insight into how capital can exist in different forms provides a wider context and laid the foundation for the later work. Bourdieu also emphasises the value of the resources that networks provide connections to, not just the tie itself,

[560] Warde, A. and Tampubolon, G. 2002. 'Social Capital, Networks and Leisure Consumption', *Sociological Review* 50 (2), pp. 155-180. p. 175.

which is an important insight. For all of his work's shortcomings, Lin is the only author that attempts to produce a systematic theory of social capital, and the network authors as a whole represent an active research community. While their work is not conclusive, at least there is conceptual debate among them and acknowledgment of other work in the field.

3.5.1.) What the Network approach can offer Putnam

The Network approach offers Putnam a more thorough analysis of weak ties in the context of heterophilous relations. It also outlines the implications of the differing values of resources that ties connect to. If Putnam is to persist with an analysis of what he terms bridging social capital, he could use much of the network authors' work on the subject. By taking structural factors – such as the impact of economic resources on the ultimate value of ties – into account the network authors also provide an insight into economic inequality's relationship with social capital. As noted in Chapter One, this is a matter in which Putnam has expressed more interest in his recent work. In addition, by highlighting the potentially negative aspects of dense networks, the network authors demonstrate in more detail why some networks have a "downside".

The network authors' work tends to be at the micro-level, which appears to be the most suitable for examining the intricacies of the differing economic and social contexts that can affect social capital. Bridging social capital/heterophilous relations are difficult, perhaps impossible, to examine at the macro-level through aggregated quantitative data. While weak ties are vital for community cohesion, as Granovetter suggests, these communities are ultimately limited in size and geography (i.e. not a nation, but a community where some form of direct or indirect contact is possible between most members). If Putnam wants to pursue the conceptually fruitful notion of bridging social capital, he may have to adopt a more individual-focused perspective. This is considered further in the conclusion.

The network version proposes that the utility of social capital is not totally divorced from economic status. Rather it is seen as dependant in part upon the individual's point of origin, an insight mainly absent in other versions of the concept. While the network version is not as ambitious in scale as Putnam's, it may well prove to be the most useful. In addition, some of its proponents emphasise the provisional state of the concept at the present time, reflecting its fledging status. Despite this version of the concept having a lack of ambition when compared to Putnam's, it is certainly one of the most original and productive incarnations of social capital. Its individual perspective is distinctive and it is argued in the conclusion (Chapter Four) that it can be utilised in conjunction with the collective (in small groups) perspective outlined in Chapter Two.

4.) Conclusion – Are the problems inherent in Putnam's concept of social capital intractable?

This chapter forms the conclusion of the thesis. It will seek to answer the question of whether Putnam's concept of social capital can be modified or should be abandoned altogether. This will be based around the framework that emerged in relation to the issues raised by Putnam's work.

4.1.) Structure of the conclusion

Having established the issues arising from Putnam's use of social capital in Chapter One, the other two main variants of social capital were examined in Chapters Two and Three to see whether they can provide any solutions to these problems. To reiterate, the six issues are:

1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework;
2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital;
3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency;
4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes;
5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are;
6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created.

The evaluations from each of the chapters will not be reproduced verbatim, although the key findings relating to each issue will be compared and contrasted. The objective of this will be to see how in each instance the various authors address an issue raised by Putnam's work, and the merits of each approach. Finally, whether Putnam's work on social capital can be redeemed will be considered. First of all there will be a recap of the different definitions of social capital.

4.1.1.) The differing definitions of social capital

As a reminder of the differing versions of social capital, the definition offered by each author examined in this thesis is reproduced below:

Fig 4.1.) Definitions of social capital

Civic Engagement approach

Putnam in *Making Democracy Work*:

'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions'.[561]

Putnam in *Bowling Alone*:

'social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.'[562]

Collective Action approach

Coleman:

'Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure.'[563]

Ostrom:

'the shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules and expectations about patterns of interactions that groups of individuals bring to a recurrent activity'.[564]

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[561] Putnam, R. D. with Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. Y. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton University Press. p.167.
[562] Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon & Schuster. p. 19.
[563] Coleman, J. S. 1988. 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* vol 94, S95-S120. p. S98.
[564] Ostrom, E. 2000. 'Social capital: a fad or a fundamental concept?', in Dasgupta, P., and Serageldin, I. *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective.* Washington, D. C.: The World Bank, pp. 172-214. p. 176.

Network approach

Bourdieu:

'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'.[565]

Burt:

'Social capital is at once the resources contacts hold and the structure of contacts in a network. The first term describes whom you reach. The second describes how you reach.'[566]

Portes:

'social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of memberships in social networks or other social structures.'[567]

Foley and Edwards:

'Individuals or collective actors can be said to have social capital when the resources are present and accessible, in other words when they are actually available for use. Thus, social capital = resources + access.'[568]

Lin:

'social capital, which is not the individual's possessed goods, but resources accessible through direct and indirect ties. Access to and use of these resources is temporary and borrowed in the sense that the actor does not possess them. A friend's bicycle is one's social capital. One can use it to achieve a certain goal, but it must be returned to the friend.' [569]

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[565] Bourdieu, P. 1986 [1983]. 'The Forms of Capital', in Richardson, J. G. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258. pp. 248-9.
[566] Burt, R. S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 12.
[567] Portes, A. 1998. 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 1-24, p. 6.
[568] Foley, M. W., and Edwards, B. 1999. 'Is it Time to Disinvest in Social Capital?', *Journal of Public Policy.* 19 (2), 141-173. p. 166.
[569] Lin, N. 2001. *Social Capital – A Theory of Social Structure and Action.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 56.

4.1.2.) The key differences between the authors' definitions

There are key definitional differences between the social capital authors. While some authors emphasise norms (Putnam, Coleman, and Ostrom), others cite resources as being important (Bourdieu, Burt, Portes, Foley and Edwards, and Lin). All of the authors highlight networks as being part of social capital, and this is the sole common feature. Putnam specifically links social capital to civic engagement. His original definition includes three main elements: trust, norms and networks. Putnam's later definition shifts the emphasis slightly to suggest that networks are the most important of the three, with norms and trust arising from them.

Ostrom and Coleman's definitions look at what can facilitate the actions of actors, and again suggest that social capital can take a number of forms. For Coleman, anything that facilitates action is social capital. Ostrom cites norms, rules, expectations, shared knowledge and understanding as social capital. There is certainly common ground between Putnam, Coleman and Ostrom as they all see social capital as facilitating action of some kind.

Bourdieu pinpoints the resources in an individual's networks as social capital. The other network authors highlight the benefits of membership in networks that accrue to individuals. Lin regards resources only as social capital, whereas Burt and Foley and Edwards see access, as well as resources, as social capital.

Some of the authors have much narrower definitions of social capital than others. Lin defines it specifically as a resource that is "borrowed". In contrast, Putnam, Coleman, and Ostrom include many elements in their definitions. Yet there is also ambiguity in Lin's definition. For example, "resources" are very broadly defined. They range from resources that are physically manifested, such as the bicycle used in the definition, to virtual resources, such as information. Bourdieu implies that the resources that constitute social capital are mainly economic.

One frequent criticism of Putnam (as outlined in Chapter One) is that his definition is too broad. Yet some sort of definitional ambiguity is apparent in most of the definitions above, ranging from what social capital actually is, to what precisely constitutes resources.

4.2.) Issues that emerged in relation to Putnam's concept of social capital

In Chapter One, six issues emerged from the main points of contention with Putnam's work on social capital. Some of the issues are problems that have yet to be addressed by Putnam (conceptual framework, level of analysis). Other issues have been partially, but so far unsatisfactorily, tackled by him (the negative outcomes of social capital, the implications of bridging social capital, whether social capital can be consciously created). The other issue (balancing considerations of structure and agency) is a problem endemic in the social sciences more generally.

The other authors were examined to ascertain how they addressed all these issues in relation to social capital, and whether their approach could aid Putnam in any way. In Chapters Two and Three it was shown that most of the other social capital authors can contribute something to at least one of these issues.

This section will summarise how the authors address each problem and how this might aid Putnam's version of the concept.

4.2.1.) Whether social capital is used as part of a broader conceptual framework

This issue emerges from Putnam not producing a comprehensive conceptual framework. He introduces the concept of social capital in the final chapter of *Making Democracy Work*. This is very much in the context of collective action dilemmas, but this framework is something he barely mentions in his later work. In fact, there is little conceptual discussion in his later material on social capital outside of the introduction to *Bowling Alone*. Putnam appears to adapt the concept of social capital for each task he approaches. First of all, he uses it to explain why levels of civic engagement vary in Italy. Secondly, it is utilised to understand why there has been a decline in civic engagement in the United States. This conceptual pragmatism leaves his work on social capital in a state of flux.

Putnam does not examine civil society's relationship to government or the importance of economic resources in any great detail. Placing so much emphasis on the role of social capital and its purported benefits downplays how other factors (for

example political and economic) might impinge on the processes described. The implication of this issue with Putnam's work is that the concept of social capital can only ever provide a partial explanation of civic engagement.

The problem lies with the fact that Putnam shows little interest in developing the notion of social capital *conceptually*. He devotes much greater attention to quantitative explorations of civic engagement/social capital. In contrast, most of the other major authors examined in this thesis use social capital as part of a more strongly developed conceptual framework. The various approaches are summarised in the table below:

Table 4.1.) Authors' broader conceptual framework

Grouping	Author(s)	Broader Conceptual Framework?
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Yes but narrow: Framework concentrates on vibrancy of civil society
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Yes but narrow: Framework concentrates on vibrancy of civil society
Collective action	Coleman	Yes: Social capital is used as part of a theory that attempts to combine the economic and social streams
	Ostrom	Yes: Social capital is used part of a second generation collective action theory
Network	Bourdieu	Yes: Social capital is part of a broader approach to capital and the reproduction of inequality
	Burt	No
	Portes	No: Yet Portes and Sensenbrenner did originally seek to use social capital to combine social and economic considerations
	Foley and Edwards	No
	Lin	Yes: Develops social capital as a theory in which action is contextualised in the theory of social stratification

Putnam's interest in civic engagement distinguishes him from the other authors examined in this thesis, especially the network authors who tend to concentrate on the benefits of social capital for the individual. Putnam expands his neo-Tocquevillian approach in *Bowling Alone*. Aside from the various criticisms of Putnam perceiving contemporary civil society as being homogenous (see Chapter One); the main difficultly is his concentration on civil society while disregarding other factors. Fine criticises Putnam's focus on civil society '[t]his has been in

isolation from, and exclusive of, serious consideration of the economy, formal politics, the role of the nation-state, the exercise of power, and the divisions and conflicts that are endemic to capitalist society'.[570] Grix also notes the absence of key structural factors in much of social capital research, not only the economic inequality noted by the network theorists, but also (like Fine) political factors too:

> ...the structures of a given style of governance or form of capitalism will determine to some extent the level of access to resources or influence on decisions particular individuals or groups will have. This type of analysis, which looks at different systems of economic distribution, different cultures of corporate finance and different electoral systems – in short, different types of governance – is lacking in social capital research. A country's style of governance will set the parameters which will shape the institutions, local and social context – factors so crucial to mobilizing social capital.[571]

Putnam has never fully taken into account structural factors, and this is exacerbated by his greater emphasis on agency in his later work, which suggests that individuals can drive civic change. This is further explored below (in point 4.2.3.) looking at structure and agency.

Despite Putnam's citations of a number of conceptual approaches – including collective action theories, new institutionism, and human capital – he does not show as greater interest in conceptual deliberations as the other authors featured in this thesis. Coleman and Ostrom develop the concept of social capital in response to shortcomings in existing theories. Bourdieu uses it to expand his own work on the reproduction of inequality, and develops his version of social capital to complement his concept of cultural capital. Lin, similarly to Coleman and Ostrom, uses social capital in an attempt to help to rectify problems in existing theoretical work. In Lin's case, this is to add considerations of action to social stratification theory.

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[570] Fine, B. 2001. *Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political economy and social science at the turn of the millennium.* London: Routledge. p. 191.
[571] Grix, J. 2001. 'Social Capital as a Concept in the Social Sciences: The Current State of the Debate', *Democratization.* 8 (3), 189-210. pp. 206-7.

It is not argued here that it would benefit Putnam's work to adopt one of the other authors' conceptual frameworks. They come from various theoretical traditions with some, such as Bourdieu, being very different to Putnam's approach. Yet some are closer to Putnam's work. For example, Coleman and Ostrom both utilise rational choice and collective action theories. Putnam also introduces his version of the concept in a collective action context in *Making Democracy Work*, but never uses it consistently. Yet it could be argued that Putnam maintains a collective action approach in a general sense. Putnam argues that a nation-state can work *collectively* in the same way that, for example, a village might in an irrigation project highlighted in Ostrom's work. This collective action has broader goals and is tied to notions of the nation-state itself. At one point Putnam refers to the level of taxation and whether to limit lawn sprinklers as examples of collective action dilemmas.[572] He also believes that these problems are not insoluble: '[t]hey are best solved by an institutional mechanism with the power to ensure compliance with the collectively desirable behavior. Social norms and the networks that enforce them provide such a mechanism.'[573] Putnam also asserts that collective action on a mass scale is aided by trust and increased tolerance, which can be developed through having wide social networks.[574] Coleman and Ostrom's versions of social capital would therefore be simply too constraining for Putnam because he generalises collective action, opposed to examining it in specific networks.

4.2.1.1.) Summary of conceptual frameworks

In Chapter One it was clear that Putnam showed much greater interest in empirical work opposed to conceptual deliberations when examining social capital. In contrast, the other main social capital authors have tended to use the concept of social capital as part of a broader conceptual enterprise. Yet there is no reason why Putnam's conceptual framework can not be expanded to take into account other factors.

[572] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 288.
[573] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 288.
[574] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 288-9.

Significantly, Putnam and Feldstein are more willing to acknowledge the role of such structures in *Better Together.*[575]

The insufficient consideration of economic inequality's relationship with social capital in Putnam's concept is something that can be aided by some of the other authors' work. Bourdieu and Lin (as well as Portes and Foley and Edwards) highlight the impact of existing economic status on the *value* of social capital. This expands on Putnam's (following on from Coleman) point that social capital is *a resource in itself* (in the sense that it assists in either individual gain or collective action). This insight from Bourdieu, and those that have followed, demonstrates that social capital – while a resource in itself – will be more valuable if the *economic status* of those involved is of a higher value. The implication of this is that, firstly, a community which is extremely well connected (therefore having a high stock of social capital), will receive various benefits that would not be present in the absence of these connections. Yet if the community is economically depressed and the majority of its members are financially disadvantaged, then there is a limit to what this stock of social capital can achieve.

4.2.2.) What the most appropriate level of analysis is for social capital

This issue relates to Putnam's focus on the macro-level. Whereas some authors (the "Putnam School") also use quantitative measures of social capital to look at national trends, those taking a more detailed conceptual approach tend to focus on individuals and small groups. The question is whether some of the conceptual "vagueness" in Putnam's work arises from him examining social capital on a too greater scale. For example, key conceptual developments such as the notion of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction is more difficult to aggregate and is often context-specific (see point 4.2.5. below).

Portes asserts that some of the controversy surrounding social capital has to do with 'its use in theories involving different units of analysis.'[576] Portes points to

[575] Putnam, R. D. and Feldstein, L. W. 2003. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community.* New York: Simon and Schuster. pp. 271-5.

the fact that authors not only differ from each other in their level of analysis, but sometimes utilise more than one unit themselves. Not that this is necessarily a problem in itself, but it has led to conceptual confusion in some cases. The table below outlines each author's position on this:

Table 4.2.) Level of analysis

Grouping	Author(s)	Level of analysis
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Macro and Meso: National and sub-national (comparative and longitudinal)
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Macro and Meso: Mainly national longitudinal, with some regional (by state) comparison
Collective action	Coleman	Micro: Individuals and small groups
	Ostrom	Micro: Small groups
Network	Bourdieu	Micro: Small groups and broader classes
	Burt	Micro: Individuals
	Portes	Micro: Individuals and small groups
	Foley and Edwards	Micro: Individuals
	Lin	Micro: Individuals

The relative merits of these different levels of analysis of social capital are considered below.

4.2.2.1.) The micro-level

As already noted in the previous chapter, Lin identifies two perspectives at the micro-level of analysis: one looking at the returns accrued by an individual, the other

[576] Portes, A. 2000. 'The Two Meanings of Social Capital', *Sociological Forum.* 15 (1), pp. 1-12. p. 2.

by small groups. Portes makes a similar identification.[577] For Lin, the network version is essentially an individual-based perspective: 'the focal points for analysis in this perspective are (1) how individuals invest in social relations and (2) how individuals capture the embedded resources in the relations to generate a return.'[578] Lin also suggests that some accumulative effect is possible: '[a]ggregation of individual returns also benefits the collective',[579] but does not expand upon this.

Lin asserts that the group perspective dwells on: '(1) how certain groups develop and more or less maintain social capital as a collective asset and (2) how such a collective asset enhances group members' life chances.'[580] Lin cites Coleman and Bourdieu as social capital authors interested in the assets of groups.

4.2.2.2.) The macro-level

Lin differentiates between network-level group analysis and larger-scale conceptualisations:

> At the group level, social capital represents some aggregation of valued resources (e.g., economic, political, cultural, or social, as in social connections) of members interacting as a network or networks. The difficulty arises when social capital is discussed as collective or even public goods. What has occurred in the literature is that some terms have become alternative or substitutable terms or measurements. Divorced from its roots in individual interactions and networking, social capital becomes merely another trendy term to employ or deploy in the broad context of improving or building social integration and solidarity.[581]

Criticisms of Putnam (and of Coleman to a lesser extent) by Lin are implicit in this. For Lin, groups and networks are definable, but at a certain level the analysis simply becomes too abstracted. Lin is correct in the sense that social capital has individual

[577] Portes, 'Social Capital', pp.3-6.
[578] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 21.
[579] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 21.
[580] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 22.
[581] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 26.

interaction at its heart, and that the concept has greater clarity when this is borne in mind. The key question is what the maximum size of network is that will be manageable for this type of analysis. It is argued in this thesis that networks must remain definable rather than becoming more abstract (i.e. regions and nations). Problems emerge when networks, and their relationships with one another, become too nebulous and the clarity of analysis is lost.

Portes believes that there are a couple of problems with much of the macro-level work on social capital. Firstly, that there is a lack of conceptual coherence by those espousing this perspective: 'the transition of the concept from an individual asset to a community or a national resource was never explicitly theorized, giving rise to the present state of confusion about the meaning of the term.'[582] Secondly, whereas at the micro-level the material and informational benefits 'were clearly separate and distinct from the social structures that produced them',[583] he believes that the causes and effects have never been disentangled by those working at the macro-level. As will be seen shortly, more intricate conceptual differentiations, such as the bonding/bridging distinction, are more difficult to distinguish at the macro-level.

4.2.2.3.) Multiple levels of analysis

Lin notes that many authors believe that there are both individual and group level effects of social capital: '[m]ost scholars agree that it is both collective and individual goods; that is, institutionalized social relations with embedded resources are expected to benefit both the collective and the individuals in the collective.'[584] For example, Putnam writes about individuals' social capital in relation to health and education, as well as his overall focus on collective benefits such as civic engagement.

[582] Portes, 'Two Meanings of Social Capital', p. 3.
[583] Portes, 'Two Meanings of Social Capital', p. 4.
[584] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 26.

While some authors believe that multiple levels of analysis are appropriate for social capital, Portes asserts that there may be a conflict between individual and collective social capital:

> The confusion becomes evident when we realize that the two definitions of the concept, though compatible in some instances, are at odds in others. For instance, the right "connections" allow certain persons to gain access to profitable public contracts and bypass regulations binding on others. "Individual" social capital in such instances consists precisely in the ability to undermine "collective" social capital – defined as civic spirit grounded on impartial application of the laws.[585]

This is an important point; if there is indeed both individual and collective social capital, they might well be in conflict on occasions. However, this conflict is not conceptual; rather it means that the motives of an individual and the collective may be at odds in certain instances.

4.2.2.4.) Summary of levels of analysis

Various authors have produced fruitful analysis looking at social capital at the micro-level. This ranges from the benefits of membership of certain networks for individuals (Bourdieu, Burt and Lin); to the importance of network closure for certain groups in some instances (Coleman, Ostrom, and Portes). Ultimately, social capital is often conceptually cogent when looking at individuals and small groups. This cogency is lost when examining social capital at the macro-level. Hence Putnam's work being problematic in this sense. By analysing large-scale polities, systems are analysed with numerous networks that overlap to varying degrees. It is difficult enough studying social capital within well-defined environments, but as the level increases this becomes increasingly fraught. This is one of the major points of contention with Putnam's work and will be returned to later in the chapter.

[585] Portes, 'Two Meanings of Social Capital', pp. 3-4.

4.2.3.) How social capital fits with considerations of structure and agency

The concept of social capital is very much a product of both recent and classical debates in the social sciences. One of these debates is the issue of the relative importance of structure and agency, which sometimes manifests itself in the social capital literature as conflicts between the disciplines of sociology and economics. In Putnam's work there has always been a lack of consideration of certain structural factors (see point 4.2.1. above). In addition, while in *Making Democracy Work* individuals were seen as constrained by their environments, in *Bowling Alone* agency is perceived as being much more influential. The question is whether Putnam could more successfully balance considerations of structure and agency in his work on social capital.

Many attempts have been made to amalgamate considerations of structure and agency, and as Bottero notes: 'the history of social analysis is a graveyard of failed attempts to balance the terms of these binaries. In practice, one side or the other has become dominant.'[586] This is true for many authors that use the concept of social capital as part of an enterprise to *explicitly balance considerations of structure and agency*. The various authors' positions are outlined below:

[586] Bottero, W. 2005. *Stratification: Social division and inequality.* London: Routledge. p. 54.

Table 4.3.) How the authors address issues of structure and agency

Grouping	Author(s)	Considerations of structure and agency
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Asserts that structural constraints restrict civic engagement
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Asserts that agency can drive civic engagement
Collective action	Coleman	Explicitly wants to balance the two
	Ostrom	Explicitly wants to balance the two
Network	Bourdieu	Concentrates on structural restraints
	Burt	Agency is seen as the driving force
	Portes	Originally set out to balance the two
	Foley and Edwards	Try to balance the two
	Lin	Explicitly wants to balance the two

Coleman considers individuals' social environments to a certain extent, such as family and primordial ties, and takes some larger structural factors into account, such as religion. Yet, his work on social capital does not set out to take into account the broader implications of inequality. Field is critical of Coleman for ultimately neglecting structural factors and focusing on agency,[587] and asserts that his work has been widely criticised for 'a highly individualistic, and calculating, model of human behaviour.'[588] Coleman is ultimately more interested in how social capital is useful regardless of an individual's social and financial status. In Ostrom's work there is certainly a lack of consideration of the effect of economic inequality, and the role of the individual is over-emphasised at the expense of – despite her claims to the contrary – accounts of the social environment. After all, her concept of social capital, like Coleman's, is supposedly designed to address the overly isolated individual in rational/collective action theories. However, Field believes that these rational choice versions of social capital do contribute something, precisely because they do focus on agency: '[r]ational choice theories of social capital should not be

[587] Field, J. 2003. *Social Capital.* London: Routledge. p. 141.
[588] Field, *Social Capital*, p. 140.

dismissed out of hand. Apart from anything else, they provide a useful counterbalance to those who overestimate the importance of structure and downplay the role of agency.'[589]

The absence of economic and status considerations in all but the network version manifests itself again in this issue. Franklin asserts that: '[t]he problem with the discourse of social capital is that it embeds an alternative relationship between structure and agency, without taking vertical inequalities into account.'[590] Bourdieu's work on social capital is very much more of a structuralist approach than most of the others, with class divisions helping to dictate cultural tastes and social environment. This comes at the expense of considerations of agency. There is little room for individual action or social mobility in his formulation. Individual actors in Bourdieu's conception are highly constrained by their environment (predominantly dictated by economic distribution), and this is reinforced by cultural reproduction, and is also reflected in the varying utility of social capital.

Lin incorporates considerations of both structure and agency. Yet he focuses on individuals' instrumental action in formal networks, in what he himself terms a rational choice theory of social capital.[591] Lin claims that he makes the notion of action more explicit than other social capital authors,[592] and is keen to emphasise instrumental action as a driving force of human behaviour.[593] Yet he also notes that such a theory should highlight the importance of both structure and agency:

> Ultimately, a viable social theory must integrate both individual and structural elements. A comprehensive and balanced treatment of these two elements, I suspect, is the challenge sociologists must accept in order to offer theories that are both analytically and descriptively valid.[594]

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[589] Field, *Social Capital*, p. 140.
[590] Franklin, J. 2003. 'Social Capital: Policy and Politics', *Social Policy & Society* 2 (4), pp. 349-352. p. 350.
[591] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 127.
[592] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 52-3.
[593] Lin, *Social Capital*, pp. 41-54.
[594] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 142.

It has to be noted that Lin's theory of social capital has some success in this regard as it includes considerations of resource inequality, which are absent in the more agency-focused models of Coleman and Ostrom, and also contemplates the implications of individual action, which is largely missing from Bourdieu's work. Yet Lin's emphasis on *instrumental* action tips the balance towards agency to a large extent.

Many of the authors using the concept of social capital in effect tend to emphasise agency, while noting structural constraints to varying degrees. Bottero notes how, in general, there has been a series of influential approaches championing action over structure in recent years:

> ...the rise of postmodern and post-structuralist approaches have increasingly abandoned the 'grand narratives' of structural inequality altogether. So problems with 'structure' have led to a retreat into agency. People are seen as active agents, reflexively shaping their destinies.[595]

Much of the work on social capital – Putnam (in *Bowling Alone*), Coleman, Ostrom, Burt, and Lin – reflects a trend to posit agency as being more significant.

4.2.3.1.) Summary of structure and agency

It is important to note that this aspect of work on social capital reflects broader debates in the social sciences. The responsibility of solving the seemingly omnipresent issue of balancing considerations of structure and agency can hardly be laid with the concept of social capital. However, Putnam's work does suffer from a lack analysis of certain major structural factors, as discussed in relation to his conceptual framework (see point 4.2.1. above). He could certainly incorporate more structural considerations into his concept, especially economic ones. While no other social capital author systematically balances structure and agency either, notable

[595] Bottero, *Stratification: Social division and inequality*, p. 56.

efforts to include considerations of both (by Coleman, Ostrom, and Lin) highlight the importance of being conscious of this issue.

4.2.4.) Whether it is demonstrated that social capital can have negative as well as positive outcomes

One of the biggest criticisms of Putnam's early work is his perception of social capital as a mainly benign force. In many ways this is the issue with his work that is the most straightforward to resolve, and one that he has partially addressed already. All that is needed is an acknowledgment that there can be negative as well as positive outcomes from social capital, and to consider the full implications of this. Some of the undesirable outcomes of social capital outlined in this thesis include: exclusion of outsiders from social networks; excessive claims on members of networks; and networks that have criminal elements (such as the Mafia and the Ku Klux Klan). The various authors' approaches to this issue are outlined below:

Table 4.4.) Whether authors consider social capital's positive and negative outcomes

Grouping	Author(s)	Do they consider both positive and negative outcomes of social capital?
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Positive only
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Mainly positive but does note that there can be negative outcomes (especially from bonding social capital)
Collective action	Coleman	Mainly positive but notes that it can be used for negative ends
	Ostrom	Mainly positive but notes that it can be used for negative ends
Network	Bourdieu	Positive for those in the privileged networks, negative for those outside
	Burt	Positive
	Portes	Positive and negative (especially the latter)
	Foley and Edwards	Positive and negative
	Lin	Positive and negative

The key point to emerge about this issue relates to *how* social capital is used, as opposed to whether it is negative in itself. Coleman and Ostrom suggest that social capital is neither inherently good nor bad; rather that it is the application that matters. Putnam himself picks this up in *Bowling Alone*[596] and more generally explores the "dark side" of social capital by looking at its possible relationship with intolerance, but finds no evidence for this.[597] Yet, it is in the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital that Putnam truly addresses some of the negative outcomes of social capital (see point 4.2.5. below), with bonding social capital being seen as more likely to produce negative effects.

[596] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 22.
[597] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 350-363.

The issue becomes more complex if social capital is considered in the context of broader inequality (as already partly addressed in point 4.2.1.). Bourdieu sees social capital as a way that individuals in elite networks can achieve further gains, thereby exacerbating existing inequality. The implication of this is that while those in less exclusive networks might also have social capital, the resources they are accessing are worth much less. Therefore social capital is linked with economic status to some extent. This is developed by authors such as Portes, Foley and Edwards, and Lin, who believe the value of the resources being accessed is central to the ultimate worth of social capital. Yet, like Coleman and Ostrom, the network authors do not imply that social capital itself is inherently bad, rather they suggest that it *mirrors existing inequality* and can exacerbate it.

4.2.4.1.) Summary of considerations of positive and negative outcomes of social capital

The main problem with Putnam's work in this regard is that he tends to accentuate the positive. For example, communities and trust are always presented as desirable, without considering the possible negative aspects of these, as outlined by some of the other social capital authors. Putnam's lack of consideration of the *use* of social capital highlights the conceptual simplicity of his work. In the final analysis, the resolution of this problem relates strongly to the first issue (point 4.2.1.) regarding conceptual frameworks. There should be greater emphasis on how social capital is utilised, not just noting its presence (also see point 4.2.5. looking at the importance of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction). Most social capital authors appear to agree that social capital is value-free in a sense, and that it is actually its *application* that produces positive or negative outcomes. In addition to this, the network authors believe that social capital might benefit some individuals more than others due to *existing inequality*, as opposed to some malign force being embodied in social capital itself. All of these factors considered, this deficit in Putnam's work is easily soluble.

4.2.5.) What the relative merits of bonding social capital (strong ties) and bridging social capital (weak ties) are

While Putnam cites Granovetter's work on the strength of weak ties in *Making Democracy Work*, he does not really consider the implications of this differentiation until *Bowling Alone*. This is when Putnam adopts the bonding/bridging social capital distinction. The problem with his use of the distinction is that it is conceptually underdeveloped and, by his own admission, it is difficult to distinguish between the two empirically.

How different ties yield outcomes that vary greatly in value is one of the recurring themes in a lot of work on social capital. The authors' accounts of these are summarised below:

Table 4.5.) Whether authors consider both strong and weak ties

Grouping	Author(s)	Considerations of strong and weak ties
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Both, but concentrates on strong ties
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Both, concentrates on strong ties (due to easier measurement) while extolling the greater virtue of bridging social capital (through weak ties)
Collective action	Coleman	Strong ties in dense networks
	Ostrom	Strong ties in dense networks
Network	Bourdieu	Strong ties in dense networks
	Burt	Both, but extols weak ties
	Portes	Concentrates on the negative aspect of strong ties in dense networks
	Foley and Edwards	Do not specify
	Lin	Both, but articulates how heterophilous interaction(through weak ties) can reap greater benefits

All the major authors, except Coleman, Ostrom, and Bourdieu, look at weak ties to some degree. It appears that both types of tie can be valuable. On the one hand strong ties in dense networks are important for developing norms and high levels of trust, on the other casual acquaintances (through weak ties) can provide links to more diverse and valuable resources. As noted in Chapter Three, McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook define the former, homophily (involving strong ties), thus:

> Homophily is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. The pervasive fact of homophily means that cultural, behavioral, genetic, or material information that flows through networks will tend to be localized. Homophily implies that distance in terms of social

> characteristics translates into network distance, the number of relationships through which a piece of information must travel to connect two individuals.[598]

The two important points about the homophily principle are (a) that people tend to interact with those who are similar to themselves and (b) that these networks tend to be manifested in localised settings. These groups are often homogonous and linkages to the outside may be limited. As already noted, because of the importance of the value of resources held by members of the network, closed networks are more likely to be beneficial to members if the resources of the group are more valuable. If the resources in the network are poor, and if there are few linkages beyond the network, then the network is constraining (as in the cases of communities that are socially excluded).

Various social capital literature concentrates on bounded groups and closed networks (i.e. homophilous interaction). In Coleman and Ostrom's work this closure is deemed to be needed in order to produce social capital. For example, in Coleman's study of educational attainment he suggests that social capital can be provided by a close family unit. There is certainly a lack of consideration of alternative types of interaction and weaker ties in Coleman and Ostrom's conceptualisations. As noted in Chapter Two, while this is not a fault in their work, it does limit their value to Putnam because of his interest in weak ties and bridging social capital.

Bourdieu perceives elite networks as homophilous groups. He, after all, is the author that is least interested in promoting social capital as a positive phenomenon. Instead, he seeks to demonstrate that it is part of the reproduction of inequality. Yet Bourdieu overlooks cases of social mobility provided by heterophilous interaction, even if these are not common. Lin believes that homophilous interaction can be beneficial, but also asserts that weaker ties and heterophilous interaction can be of much greater value.

Social capital research places a great deal of emphasis on homophilous interaction, which is relatively easy to measure and can be beneficial. Yet it is vital

[598] McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., and Cook, J. M. 2001. ' Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks', *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 pp. 415-44. p. 416.

to register its shortcomings. Putnam's later work suggests that the "dark side" of social capital can emerge in tightly-knit communities (high in bonding social capital). Yet while Putnam notes the possible negative consequences of such homophilous groups, he still tends to focus empirically on bonding social capital (for want of better measures of bridging social capital).

Whether it is termed as bridging social capital in Putnam's work or as heterophilous interaction in Lin's work, such ties appear to be less tangible but more rewarding. As Lin points out, heterophilous interaction is rarer because the persons are not as well known to each other and may not be similar. Therefore it requires greater effort:

> ...heterophilous interactions demand effort, as the interacting partners, aware of the inequality in differential command over resources that can be brought to bear, need to assess each other's willingness to engage in exchange. The resource-poorer partner needs to be concerned about alter's intention or ability to appropriate resources from them. And the resource-richer partner needs to consider whether alters can reciprocate with resources meaningful to their already rich repertoire of resources.[599]

While Lin's is very much an instrumental account, it does draw attention to the fact that the relationship is more beneficial to one of the individuals (the resource-poorer) than the other (the resource-richer) in the short-term. As Portes notes, this is one of the key intrigues in social capital postulations (i.e. what is the motivation of the "lender" in the transaction?).[600]

It is important to consider the implications of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction, and how it relates to the five other issues emerging from Putnam's work. Bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction appears to be more tangible at the micro-level. In addition, whereas bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction helps individuals, bonding social capital/homophilous interaction seems to be able to aid collective action (as well as

[599] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 47.
[600] Portes, 'Social Capital', pp. 5-6.

individual action). As Portes notes (see point 4.2.2. above), there may be a conflict between individual and collective social capital in this regard.

Putnam suggests that the destruction of bonding social capital can be positive if it leads to the creation of bridging social capital. Writing of the "trade-offs" between the two types, he asserts that the civil rights movement in America during the 1960s set out to end racially homogonous schools and neighbourhoods (which created bonding social capital). The resulting integration brought new, bridging, social capital. Putnam outlines how busing black children to white schools formed new bridging social capital, while losing the bonding social capital inherent in the community ties of the old neighbourhood schools.[601] Ultimately, he believes that 'bridging and bonding social capital are good for different things'.[602] Putnam, conceding the contentiousness of the topic, also raises the question of whether some homophilous interaction is better than no social interaction at all. While he believes that ideally there should be bridging interaction, he ponders the inferior option: '[t]his second-best magic wand would bring more blacks and more whites to church, but not to the same church, more Hispanics and Anglos to the soccer field, but not the same soccer field. Should we use it?'[603]

4.2.5.1.) Summary of bonding and bridging social capital

This is one of the key issues to emerge in this thesis and will be returned to later in the chapter. The bonding/bridging social capital distinction is vital in order to differentiate between contrasting types of social interaction that can yield very different benefits. The network authors most successfully emphasise the potential benefits of heterophilous interaction, highlighting its ability to provide access to more valuable resources. The main problem with bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction for Putnam is that it is best analysed at the micro-level and is difficult, although not impossible, to generate aggregated data on at the macro-level. While dense networks are more common and easier to analyse, the

[601] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 362.
[602] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 363.
[603] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 362.

subtleties of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction are almost impossible to gauge except on a case-by-case basis.

With bridging social capital being so important to Putnam's later work, the closed networks (bonding social capital) studied by Coleman, Ostrom and Bourdieu only partially address Putnam's concerns. His greater interest is in bridging social capital, and this has been developed in the work by Granovetter, Burt, and Lin. While this material can provide important insights, Putnam's pursuit of it may damage his broader enterprise of looking at social capital and civic engagement at the macro-level.

4.2.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product of other activities or can also be consciously created

The last issue centres on whether social capital can be consciously produced, or whether it is only ever created as a by-product of other activities. Putnam's stance, mirroring his account of structure and agency (see point 4.2.3.), appears to shift on this. In *Making Democracy Work* he suggests that it is difficult to foster social capital and civic engagement due to deeply entrenched norms and established patterns of networks. Yet in *Bowling Alone* he suggests that networks and civic activity can be nurtured.

In Coleman's influential formulation, social capital is mainly perceived as a by-product of other activities. In the table below it is demonstrated that this perception is shared by most of the other major authors (e.g. Putnam, Ostrom, and Bourdieu), with the exception of Lin (and to a lesser extent Burt), who asserts that it can be instrumentally pursued:

Table 4.6.) Whether social capital is only ever a by-product or whether it can also be consciously created

Grouping	Author(s)	By-product or consciously created
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	By-product of social relations
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	By-product of social relations which can also be fostered
Collective action	Coleman	By-product
	Ostrom	By-product
Network	Bourdieu	By-product
	Burt	By-product and instrumentally pursued
	Portes	By-product (believes that those giving the favour are an intriguing mystery in the process)
	Foley and Edwards	By-product
	Lin	Instrumentally pursued

Putnam follows Coleman in perceiving social capital mainly as a by-product: 'social capital, unlike other forms of capital, must often be produced as a by-product of other social activities.'[604] He frames this in the context of social capital being a public good (citing Coleman), whereas conventional capital is ordinarily a private good benefiting the individual.[605] This follows from Coleman's notion that social capital is relational and is not owned by individuals. It is also important to note that in *Making Democracy Work* Putnam (citing Hechter) distinguishes *public* goods from *collective* goods. Whereas the latter tend to exclude others, the former benefits all.[606] So there is a question of whether social capital produced in exclusive networks can have public benefits too, not just for those privately benefiting in the group.

Putnam's interest in the conscious (re)generation of civic engagement in America – the main source of his wider appeal – manifests itself in this issue. Both

[604] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 170.
[605] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 170.
[606] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 242 n38.

in *Bowling Alone* and in Putnam and Feldstein's *Better Together*, a number of ways that governments can foster social capital are listed. These range from funding projects that encourage community activity, such as flea markets, to better urban design that encourages social interaction.[607]

Because social capital is often a by-product and does not have immediately discernable benefits, there is a question about why individuals would want to invest in it. Coleman asserts that the 'public-good aspect of social capital means that it is in a fundamentally different position with respect to purposeful action than are most other forms of capital.'[608] Yet while Coleman believes that social capital can be used for purposeful action, the problem for him (due to his emphasis on rational action) lies with the fact that the benefits also go to people other than the investor:

> Social capital is an important resource for individuals and can greatly affect their ability to act and their perceived quality of life. They have the capability of bringing such capital into being. Yet because many of the benefits of actions that bring social capital into being are experienced by persons other than the person so acting, it is not to that person's interest to bring it into being. The result is that most forms of social capital are created or destroyed as a by-product of other activities.[609]

Therefore Coleman believes that while people have the *capability* of creating social capital, they may be disinclined to do so because they cannot capture all of the benefits themselves.

Bourdieu similarly suggests that there can potentially be an investment process in social capital that is consciously pursued. Yet he believes that it is difficult for the investor to gauge the level of returns that can potentially be made (in the form of reciprocation of the favour), if any at all. As noted in the last chapter, Bourdieu believes that investment in social capital is a particularly fraught business because it comes without the transparency and safeguards that are evident in purely financial transactions:

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[607] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 412-4; and Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together*, pp. 271-94.
[608] Coleman, J. S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 317.
[609] Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 317.

> ...the declared refusal of calculation and of guarantees which characterizes exchanges tending to produce a social capital in the form of a capital of obligations that are usable in the more or less long term (exchange of gifts, services, visits, etc.) necessarily entails the risk of ingratitude, the refusal of that recognition of nonguaranteed debts which such exchanges aim to produce.[610]

It has already been highlighted that the last sentence implies that Bourdieu is suggesting that the giving of gifts that create obligations can have a consciously instrumental element as they *aim to produce recognition of the debts accrued.*

Yet it is only with the work of Lin that the notion of social capital being *instrumentally* pursued overtly emerges. He notes that by doing this he is making 'explicit the hints of purposive action suggested by Granovetter and Burt'.[611] It is important to contemplate the implications of this. It suggests a greater awareness of the investment involved on the part of the individual and of a more self-interested motivation: '[m]otivated action guides interactions. Instrumental action, in particular, motivates investing – seeking out and mobilizing – in relations and connections that may provide access to social resources.'[612] While this may well occur, there is nothing in Lin's account about forming friendships and general relationships *for their intrinsic value*. It is not being argued here that individuals *never* form relationships with an ulterior motive, rather that it unwise to suggest that this is the *primary* reason for making such connections. This is by far the weakest part of Lin's formulation and is symptomatic of his focus on formal structures and the fact that his formative work on social capital (like other network authors) mainly examines *work-based relations*. The application of this literature to wider, less formal, social relations, limits the utility of Lin's theory.

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[610] Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 253-4.
[611] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 53.
[612] Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 53.

4.2.6.1.) Summary of whether social capital is a by-product and/or consciously created

Most authors see social capital as a by-product of other activities, although some believe that it can also be consciously pursued. Undoubtedly most social capital is of the former type. This is because numerous social interactions occur, and networks are built, without a conscious agenda to improve either individual wealth or strengthen a group or community.

Yet social capital can be intentionally created to some degree by both individuals and institutions. In Burt and Lin's work, for example, individuals are shown to "network" to improve their range of contacts, hence increase their potential social resources. In Putnam's work it is suggested that institutions can contribute to various types of community projects that might help to increase social interaction and civic engagement. However, strategies for encouraging the all-important bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction are more difficult to devise.

It is also imperative to note that there is a potential risk incurred by investing in social capital. This is a theme that recurs in work on the subject. This ranges from the rational calculation of not wanting to invest in social capital due to others gaining the benefits (in Coleman and Ostrom's work), to the hesitancy to invest in social capital due to unclear outcomes (in Bourdieu's work). Social capital often relies on an individual making an altruistic act, without insurance of reciprocity, which has no tangible short-term gain. As Portes notes, this is a central tenet of the concept.[613]

[613] Portes, 'Social Capital', p. 6.

4.3.) Do the alternative versions of social capital provide resources to resolve any of the problems in Putnam's work?

This thesis argues that while Putnam's concept of social capital is problematic in its present form, the difficulties are not intractable. The other social capital authors can definitely provide insights that can strengthen Putnam's work. How all of the authors address the six issues is summarised in the table below:

Table 4.7.) How the authors address each issue

Grouping	Author(s)	Conceptual framework	Level of analysis	Structure and agency	Positive and negative outcomes	Strong and weak ties	By-product and/or consciously created
Civic engagement	Putnam: *Making Democracy Work*	Yes but narrow	Macro and Meso	Structure	Positive effects only	Concentrates on strong ties	By-product
	Putnam: *Bowling Alone*	Yes but narrow	Macro and Meso	Agency	Mainly positive	Both, but concentrates on strong ties	By-product and consciously created
Collective action	Coleman	Yes	Micro	Structure and agency	Mainly positive	Strong ties in dense networks	By-product
	Ostrom	Yes	Micro	Structure and agency	Mainly positive	Strong ties in dense networks	By-product
Network	Bourdieu	Yes	Micro	Structure	Positive for those in privileged networks	Strong ties in dense networks	By-product
	Burt	No	Micro	Agency	Positive	Both, but emphasises weak ties	By-product and instrumentally pursued
	Portes	No	Micro	Structure and agency	Positive and negative	Strong ties in dense networks	By-product
	Foley and Edwards	No	Micro	Structure and agency	Positive and negative	Do not specify	By-product
	Lin	Yes	Micro	Structure and agency	Positive and negative	Both, but emphasises weak ties	Instrumentally pursued

Some of the six issues can be more easily resolved than others. The areas of Putnam's analysis of social capital that can be added to by other authors include: the need to consider both structure and agency to some extent (Coleman, Ostrom, and Lin); the need to note the negative effects of social capital (Portes and Lin); and the need to accept that social capital is a by-product, but which on occasions can be consciously pursued (Coleman). In addition, the importance of a coherent conceptual framework is also apparent from the work of most of the major authors. Putnam can expand his conceptual framework by considering other political, social, and economic factors.

Of the six issues arising from Putnam's work, two seem to be the most difficult to resolve. Firstly, Putnam's macro-level focus is problematic. Much of the conceptual complexity of social capital is more appropriate for analysis at the micro-level. Secondly, linked to levels of analysis, is the problem of considering the full implications of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction. Various contexts have to be considered when looking at this, and this is difficult to do so at the macro-level. These two interlinked issues are considered below.

4.3.1.) Whether it is judicious to analyse social capital at the macro-level

The main difficultly with Putnam's concept of social capital is undoubtedly his macro-level analysis. None of the other authors examined take the same macro-approach as Putnam. Coleman, Ostrom, and Bourdieu all look at groups of various sizes, but these are all relatively small and clearly defined. The rest of the authors focus on individuals in specific networks. This thesis argues that conceptualising social capital as a property of nations, or even regions, loses sight of various social, political, and economic contexts.

There are two types of analysis that are appropriate for examining social capital. One focuses on the individual (as outlined in the work of Lin and the network authors) and the other on the collective (the small groups that are outlined in the work of Coleman, Ostrom, and Bourdieu). It is worth noting that in his work Putnam does consider instances of both individual social capital and collective social

capital in small groups, in addition to larger communities, to some extent already. What Putnam's work needs is for the macro-level to be abandoned and for the other two types of analysis to be more clearly differentiated.

In doing this it is also necessary to distinguish between different types of externalities from social capital. There can be *direct benefits* of social capital, accruing to the individual or group involved; and *indirect benefits* of social capital, going to others, the by-product first outlined by Coleman. The element of the latter that provoked so much interest in Putnam's work is the *public good aspect of social capital*, also first cited by Coleman. This is not only a by-product accruing to someone outside the original exchange, but also has some kind of larger benefit, for example a reduction in crime due to a neighbourhood-watch network. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam's extensive quantitative data records instances of social capital which have various benefits for individuals (from better health to greater education) and various public benefits (such as lower crime and greater economic prosperity).

Conceptual clarity through focusing on specific networks is needed in Putnam's work, rather than treating a nation-state as something that acts as a single collective. There are various networks within in a nation-state that can achieve collective action, but it is important to distinguish between those who belong to, and those who are excluded from, such networks. Noting this conceptual point, an alternative way of looking at Putnam's quantitative work is that by aggregating activity at the macro-level, he is indicating *the conditions which are potentially conducive to producing social capital*. Yet when looking at *social capital itself*, it is necessary to focus on individual and collective social capital in tangible networks.

4.3.2.) Emphasising bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction

The other key issue to emerge is the importance of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction. This is linked to levels of analysis in the sense that this type of social capital tends to more clearly benefit individuals, and is very much context specific. The full implications of how such interaction can benefit collectives are unclear at this time. Granovetter certainly believes that networks of weak ties are

vital for community cohesion. This entails tangible boundaries and some physical proximity, opposed to larger collectives such as regions and nations.

In terms of empirical work, it is important to note that it is not the case that bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction can *never* be incorporated into a larger dataset looking at collective social capital; rather it is just that these relations are much more difficult, although not impossible, to aggregate. For example, respondents can be asked about their friendship circle, including how often they come in contact with more casual acquaintances and what they rely on them for. This would need *specifically designed indicators* which are not available in existing datasets. As noted in Chapter One, Putnam himself admits that there are no easy ways of utilising the bonding/bridging distinction in his current datasets and that elements of both can get muddled: '[e]xhaustive descriptions of social networks in America – even at a single point in time – do not exist. I have found no reliable, comprehensive, nationwide measures of social capital that neatly distinguish "bridgingness" and "bondingness."'[614] This is due to his reliance on secondary sources, which were necessary for such a lengthy longitudinal study. Yet in his future work Putnam must incorporate the distinction more clearly. In *Bowling Alone* he notes the importance of distinguishing between the two: 'we must keep this conceptual differentiation at the back of minds as we proceed, recognizing that bridging and bonding social capital are not interchangeable.'[615]

This thesis has demonstrated that bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction can potentially be more important than bonding social capital/homophilous interaction. This is because it is through this type of interaction that social mobility and other benefits can occur. In addition, many examples of social capital put to negative uses involve strong ties in dense communities (with high levels of bonding social capital). These dense networks, by definition, are excluding to outsiders and can also be restrictive for members by placing too many demands on them.

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[614] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 23-4.
[615] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 24.

The potential conflict between individual and collective social capital is also apparent when looking at bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction. Putnam believes that bridging social capital can help the community by improving generalised trust and having individuals meeting diverse sets of people. Yet the benefits of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction can also go to an individual and remove them (through social mobility) from their original community to a more prosperous one, hence damaging the original community.

Putnam's adoption of the bonding/bridging distinction has undoubtedly added greater conceptual clarity to his work. Yet ultimately, if he is to pursue this conceptually fruitful notion, it must come at the expense of his current macro-approach. This is because there are simply too many localised factors and contexts that impinge on bridging social capital. Due to his later emphasis on the importance of bridging social capital, it is therefore important that Putnam should consider devoting at least some of his analysis to individual-level social capital. The various methodologies that network authors use to map out networks, such as position generators, could be utilised to explore this, as well as other qualitative methodologies. The work of Burt and Lin can be of great use in this. However, their limitations in concentrating on mainly formal, often work-based, networks would have to be overcome.

4.4.) The future of Putnam's concept

The alternative approaches can make various contributions to Putnam's concept of social capital. Many demonstrate the advantage of embedding the concept in a wider conceptual framework. This includes taking into account the effects of economic background, which can significantly impinge on the value of social capital. Such frameworks can also help to contextualise individuals' actions within broader structural constraints. Apart from the notable exception of Lin (and to some extent Burt), the other authors agree that social capital is *mainly* the by-product of other activities. Also of importance is that the network authors substantially develop the notions of weak ties and heterophilous interaction, which is vital for Putnam's later deliberations on bridging social capital. All of these elements can help to strengthen Putnam's work.

The point of contention remains the most appropriate level of analysis. Putnam's macro-level approach is not suitable for addressing all of the subtle nuances in more complex versions of the concept which examine the key bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction. Yet Putnam's macro-level empirical work remains compelling. Using associations, civic activity, and trust as measures of social capital, he finds clear patterns of civic engagement which are correlated with these indicators. While these are sufficient as broad proxy measures, the concept of social capital demands more subtle indicators. As already stated, it may be best to view Putnam's current empirical measures as indicating *the conditions which are potentially conducive to producing social capital*, as opposed to *social capital itself.*

While there are other potentially intriguing research enterprises linked with the term social capital – such as the analysis of social trust – the most insightful work on the concept revolves around the benefits of networks and social interaction. This thesis is not the first place to identify the importance of network models of social capital. Foley et al write of 'the recent trend toward a more "networked"

conceptualization of social capital'.[616] Grix's writes about the "post-Putnam paradigm" of social capital, essentially a network model.[617] Schuller et al assert that social network analysis 'occupies a significant place in the conceptual genealogy of social capital'.[618] Putnam himself has started to place more emphasis on networks and less on norms and trust. Schuller et al record some of these changes (as noted in Chapter One) and assert that Putnam now focuses on networks at the expense of norms: 'in jettisoning "norms", as it were, Putnam has significantly shifted his position.'[619]

No single author is able to totally rectify all of the problems in Putnam's work. Yet the concept still has great potential, especially if it focuses on individuals and small groups, opposed to large regions and nations. If Putnam continues to adapt his concept by making various distinctions and considering broader contexts, such as economic inequality, it is possible for the concept of social capital to have greater clarity and utility. By making the concept more sensitive to context, the full implications of the individual and collective benefits of social capital can be ascertained.

For Putnam, social capital is inextricably linked with the creation of a good society, high in civic engagement. His main research question is what creates a civic society, and this places an unnecessary strain on his concept of social capital. Yet Putnam's use of the concept is still very much worthwhile and can provide insights (following Coleman) into the broader public benefits of social interaction, its "public good aspect". Putnam's concept would be stronger for incorporating the insights from other social capital authors outlined above. It is certainly possible for him to have a more focused concept of social capital within a larger conceptual framework looking at civic engagement.

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[616] Foley, M.W., Edwards, B., & Diani, M. 2001. 'Social Capital Reconsidered', in Foley, M.W., Edwards, B., & Diani, M. *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective.* Hanover: University Press of New England pp. 266-280. p. 275.
[617] Grix, 'Social Capital as a Concept in the Social Sciences', pp. 202-207.
[618] Schuller, T., Baron, S., and Field, J. 2000. 'Social Capital: A Review and Critique', in Baron, S., Field, J., and Schuller, T. *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-38. p. 20.
[619] Schuller, Baron, and Field, 'Social Capital: A Review and Critique', p. 11.

4.5.) The direction of further research on social capital

There should be further conceptual development of social capital. There also needs to be more empirical work that tests several of the hypothesises related to the concept. Both of these are required to address the two (partially interconnected) issues that were the least straightforward to resolve in Putnam's work: the most suitable level of analysis and the implications of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction.

When looking at levels of analysis, future research should focus on collective social capital and the public good aspect of social capital. This is because many of the perspectives looking at individuals' social capital provide a relatively satisfactory account of it. Collective social capital, however, has many more questions arising from it that remain unanswered. It also has greater appeal because of its potential insights into community engagement and cohesion.

This thesis has argued that the idea of collective social capital is problematic when conceived in terms of large regions and nations. Yet the question remains about what constitutes a community in this context and how much individuals in a community can benefit from others' social capital. In addition, whereas the benefits of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction for individuals have been strongly articulated in the literature, its full implications for collectives remain unclear at the present time. Yet there is the notion, posited by Granovetter, that even close geographical communities need numerous weak ties between many of their members to sustain themselves. The implication being that there is a limit to the number of strong ties that can be feasibly maintained by individuals at any one time, so therefore weak ties between numerous individuals are needed for a community to function optimally.

Further conceptual research should entail deliberation of these and, to a lesser extent, the other issues discussed in this thesis in relation to Putnam's work. As has been demonstrated, no author currently offers an entirely satisfactory account of social capital. What has emerged is that any conception of social capital needs to take into account the various external factors that impinge on social interaction to

some degree, for example economic status. The current literature on social capital has also yet to consider the full implications of more casual social interaction. While Putnam discusses this to some extent in *Bowling Alone*, it is neglected by the network authors in particular in favour of more formal interaction.

Future empirical work on social capital should certainly concentrate on testing various parts of the key notion of bridging social capital/heterophilous interaction. While the network authors currently study weak ties, they are often in more formal, mainly work-based, environments where resources are being instrumentally pursued. Various types of informal non-instrumental interaction, such as socialising, need to be studied. Putnam begins to do this in his later work, but greater depth is required. Perhaps more qualitative approaches can also help to explore how social capital works in practice. There is certainly a lack of qualitative research examining social capital compared to quantitative research in the current literature.[620]

With a more rigorous conceptual approach and fresh empirical work, there can be a greater understanding of social capital. Such research would help to develop what is currently a compelling, but flawed, concept.

[620] One example of a qualitative study of social capital is Ball's work examining prospective students' decision-making processes regarding university entrance. Ball suggests that social capital helped to mould the interviewees' choices regarding higher education. He notes how they sought varying levels of advice about higher education and specific institutions through their networks, for example their parents. See: Ball, S. J. 2002. *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The middle classes and social advantage. London*, Routledge Falmer. pp. 79-110.

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