

***AN APPROPRIATE CAPITAL-ISATION?
QUESTIONING SOCIAL CAPITAL***

Ginny Morrow (editor)

Issue 1, October 2001

(special issue)



Research in progress series

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This research in progress series is designed to bring new ideas and new findings in the field of gender studies into the public arena. The authors welcome comments.

This collection of papers resulted from a one day workshop organised by the Gender Institute on 18.5.00. Any enquiries to Hazel Johnstone, h.johnstone@lse.ac.uk.

The Gender Institute was established by the London School of Economics in 1993 to address the major intellectual challenges posed by contemporary changes in gender relations. The Director is Professor Anne Phillips.

The research work of the Institute is informed by the belief that all social processes are 'gendered', and that understanding gender relations is therefore a crucial component in any social science research. Some of the projects undertaken at the Institute focus directly on the position of girls and women, the contemporary character of gender relations, and the formation of sexual identities. Others employ a gendered perspective to address issues not normally considered as gender concerns. The focus of the research projects ranges across local, national and international contexts, and the relationship between gender and ethnicity has become an increasingly prominent concern.

Research work falls broadly into five categories:

- feminist political theory
- social policy, social capital and health
- households, employment and work
- media, new communication technologies, and popular culture
- sexualities, and sexual and gender identities

Applications from those wishing to study for a PhD degree are welcome within the research initiatives outlined above. In addition, the Institute runs five Masters programme in Gender, 1) Gender Relations (2) Gender and Development, (3) Gender and Social Policy, and (4) Gender and the Media. A fifth, MSc Gender (Research) will run from 2002/3.

For further information on the LSE:Gender Institute and its research and teaching programmes contact Hazel Johnstone

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**AN APPROPRIATE CAPITAL-ISATION?
QUESTIONING SOCIAL CAPITAL
INFORMAL ROUNDTABLE PROGRAMME**

Thursday, 18th May 2000, 10.00-16.30
At the London School of Economics

9.30	Coffee/registration, Graham Wallas Room
10.	Welcome – Anne Phillips, Director, Gender Institute
10.10	Catherine Campbell, Associate Director, Social Capital Programme, GI <i>The Concept Of Social Capital</i>
10.30	1st Plenary Session On Development And Social Capital (chair: Anne Phillips)
	1. Ben Fine, Economics, SOAS <i>It Ain't Social and It Ain't Capital</i>
	2. Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, LSE Gender Institute & Sonia Reverter, University Jaime 1, Castello <i>Violence and Social Capital</i>
	3. Maxine Molyneux, Sociology, Institute of Latin American Studies <i>Latin American Perspectives on Social Capital</i>
12.45	Lunch
2pm	A220 2nd Plenary Session On Health And Social Capital (chair : Ginny Morrow, GI)
	1. Carl McLean, Gender Institute <i>Social Capital, Ethnicity and Health</i>
	2. Mildred Blaxter, School of Health Policy & Practice, UEA <i>Social capital/health capital: lay concepts?</i>
	3. Alex Scott-Samuel, Equity in Health Research & Development Unit, University of Liverpool <i>Social Capitalism's Liabilities And Assets</i>
4pm	Summary – <i>Social Capital from a Gender Perspective</i> Marina Calloni, Network Coordinator, Gender Institute
4.30	Close

Introduction:

Dr Catherine Campbell, Department of Social Psychology LSE
(Director, GI Social Capital Programme, 1996-2001)

The controversial concept of social capital has been the focus of lively debate and research in the Gender Institute for the past four years. The Institute's former director, Professor Henrietta Moore, identified social capital as a 'cutting edge' research and policy issue. Under her auspices a range of social capital projects were set up¹, and these have continued to flourish under the new Directorship of Professor Anne Phillips.

Institute work in this area has been both empirical and conceptual in nature. Conceptually colleagues have sought to interrogate the usefulness of 'social capital' for research and policy, particularly in the areas of health and community development. Empirically they have sought to examine social networks and local community participation in small urban communities in south-east England. Projects have included those focusing on children and young people (Ginny Morrow), gender (Rachael Wood), and ethnicity (Carl McLean and Cathy Campbell).²

Debates have taken place both informally and in the form of seminars and discussion workshops. The work included in the current volume is the result of one such workshop. Certain colleagues, particularly Ginny Morrow, the Editor of the current volume, have been increasingly alarmed at the meteoric rise and influence of the notion of social capital. Whilst she and others in the Institute regard the concept as a fruitful heuristic tool, they are also keenly aware that it has generated far more questions than answers. It was in the interests of exploring some of its possibilities and limitations that the workshop: *An Appropriate Capital-isation: Questioning Social Capital* was convened. The workshop was conceptualised by Institute staff Ginny Morrow, Carl McLean, Anne Phillips and Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, and implemented by Hazel Johnstone, who was also responsible for the production of this document.

As the working papers in this volume will suggest, the workshop was an energetic and lively one. Thanks are due to all who worked so hard to make it possible, and who contributed both to the debates on the day and to making this volume possible.

¹ Projects have been funded by various sources including the Health Education Authority, the Health Development Agency and the Eleanor Rathbone Trust.

² Some of the publications generated by these projects are listed in an Appendix.

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PUTTING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN PERSPECTIVE: A CASE OF UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS?

Catherine Campbell³

The concept of social capital has been around for much longer than Putnam's 1993 book, (*Making Democracy Work*) through the work of Coleman, Bourdieu and others (see Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000, for a review). However, certainly in my fields of interest, viz: the areas of health promotion and community development, it was this book of Putnam's that catapulted the concept of 'social capital' to the centre stage of an extraordinary range of research and policy agenda's. In this book, Putnam defines social capital in terms of the community cohesion associated with: the existence of co-operative and accessible *community networks/ organisations*; high levels of *participation* in these; a strong sense of *local identity*; and high levels of *trust, mutual help and support* amongst community members.

The concept is being used to predict and explain a wide range of outcomes, including those as variable as household income in Tanzania and the Philippines, the effectiveness of local government in Italy and the US, and levels of mortality in Russia. The concept has become the darling of a number of influential policy makers, development agencies, and high profile researchers. Shortly after its appearance a leading international journal reviewed Putnam's work, citing it as 'the greatest work of social science since Marx and Pareto'. Few who have read Putnam's book would disagree that this is something of an over-statement. The work relies on unremarkable statistical and methodological techniques, and it is largely descriptive and atheoretical in nature. Outside of its historical context, it seems an unlikely vehicle for all the accolades and attention it has received.

However, in this case, context has been everything. Ron Labonte (1999), Fine (this volume) and many others, have pointed out that the reason why the concept was grasped so enthusiastically was -- in the absence of any theoretical grounding within a broader

³ Department of Social Psychology, LSE

theory of power relations -- it has served as a blank cipher which could be moulded to a range of political agenda's. The concept came as something of a 'gift' to thinkers of the neo-liberal free market persuasion -- who argued that grassroots voluntary organisations and neighbourhood networks should take over many functions (e.g. welfare) previously assigned to governments. Building social capital became a justification for cuts in welfare spending in more affluent countries; and for reduced development aid to less affluent countries. In this regard, the coincidence of some of Putnam's ideas with the rise of Third Way politics - both in the US and the UK - can carry part of the burden of explanation for all the attention the concept has generated.

On the other hand the concept has also appealed to people on the left of the political spectrum. They use it to argue that its only through the building social capital in socially excluded communities that previously marginalised people will ever gain the confidence or power to lobby governments to meet their needs. Thus, building trust, local identity and neighbourhood networks becomes an essential building block in a broader re-distributive political programme.

In my view the concept of social capital has fallen victim to hopelessly unrealistic expectations. I believe that once we tone down our expectations, the concept of social capital is a potentially extremely important and useful concept in particular research and policy contexts, in a far more limited way than people currently suppose.

The first of these unrealistic expectations is that we should work towards developing the concept of social capital into a conceptual tool which might apply across disciplines. I have already emphasised that my interest in social capital lies within the context of a particular set of disciplinary concerns and practical interests - community development and health promotion. In my view, to assume that one could develop a unitary concept which would predict and explain outcomes in spheres as diverse and complex as the economic, the political and the medical -- in the manner of a Grand Theory -- seems to me unduly optimistic and old-fashioned. In my view, the concept's usefulness from one disciplinary context

or one sphere of practical application to another is a matter that must be argued on a case-by-case basis, rather than assumed.

The second unrealistic expectation lies in the desire to develop a concept of social capital that might be used as a research and policy tool across countries and cultures. The current fashion for taking Putnam's dimensions of social capital - developed on the basis of research done in Italy and America - and unproblematically seeking to use it to measure community cohesion for policy and research in contexts ranging from Zimbabwe to Guatemala to England, seems to me an unduly optimistic one.

Thus, for example, recent research in the Gender Institute examined the potential of Putnam's 'social capital' for describing local community life in a town in southeast England (Campbell, Wood and Kelly, 1999). We found that the concept would need to be quite dramatically reworked to apply to small local communities in England. We argued that Putnam's conceptualisation of a 'cohesive community' -- characterised by a sense of common identity and generalised trust between neighbourhood residents -- bore little resemblance to the rapidly changing, dynamic and divided nature of contemporary community life in this particular town. Membership of formal organisations of the type Putnam emphasises, such as Residents' Associations, or church groups, was extremely low, with people's main social networks consisting of informal face-to-face groups of friends and relatives. The notion of generalised trust or a common identity with other relative strangers, simply because they lived in the same neighbourhood, seemed rather bizarre to our interview informants. As one informant said: 'I've had marvellous support from my friends, but its nonsense to suggest that I would rely on Fred Bloggs for help just because he lived across the road.'

People had no time or interest in participating in community life, once they had paid the mortgage and cooked for the children. Those without jobs lacked the confidence to feel that they had anything to offer the community. As one young man said: 'How could I help the community - I don't even have any GCSEs'. In short, there was little evidence for an actual or latent culture of

community participation that the concept of social capital presupposes.

Unsurprisingly, those community networks and resources that did exist were not equally created, sustained and accessed by everyone. In terms of trust and common identity, our local community of interest was divided by sharp divisions based on generation, gender and housing tenure. These divisions fractured the possibility of a sense of common identity or a belief in the value of co-operation with other community members.

This takes me to the third unrealistic expectation which has crept into many discussions of social capital. This is the expectation that one can meaningfully talk about social capital as the property of geographical communities, without taking account of intra-community differences in the way in which social capital is created, sustained and accessed. This assumption is frequently made in large-scale survey studies which measure aggregate levels of social capital across geographical states or towns or suburbs. A current Gender Institute research project is finding quite dramatic differences in the way in which different groupings create and access social capital within one small local community, based on interviews with residents who identify themselves as Pakistani Kashmiri, African-Caribbean and White English (Campbell and McLean, in press).

Ginny Morrow's important research into social capital amongst children, again in the Gender Institute, points to significant differences in the social capital available to children and adults (Morrow, 1999). Even Morrow, ever sceptical about the concept of social capital, has conceded that in the context of a human rights framework, social capital has served as a useful heuristic device. It has helped her to highlight vast inequalities in the opportunities that children and adults have to participate in decisions regarding their day-to-day lives.

Moving back to health, the concept of social capital is increasingly being mentioned in debates about health inequalities. One increasingly reads or hears of research projects which seek to argue, for example, that social capital is 1.3 or 3.4 times more or

less useful in predicting health inequalities than socio-economic status. In my view, research of this nature is premised on a whole raft of unrealistic expectations. It is extremely problematic to set up social capital and socio-economic status as competing explanatory variables, or indeed to imply that it makes any sense at all to talk of social capital independently of material wealth or deprivation. Here, Bourdieu's (1986) view of the role played by social capital in the process whereby social hierarchies are reproduced (or less commonly transformed) is more interesting than Putnam's. In our current Gender Institute Research Programme on ethnicity, social capital and health inequalities, Carl McLean and myself start from the assumption that it has been conclusively proved that material deprivation and minority ethnic status are key determinants of health inequalities. It is within this context that we seek to examine the way in which various forms of social exclusion undermine people's access to potentially health-enhancing social capital in their local communities.

I think much of the misunderstanding and controversy around social capital in the health arena has arisen as a result of the misplaced attempt to set it up in competition to SES as an explanatory variable, rather than seeing the two phenomena as inter-dependent. Wallace (1993) makes this point very clearly in his article on the impact of poverty and racism on the fabric of local community life in inner city areas in America, linking this analysis to high levels of HIV amongst poor black Americans. Gillies et al. (1996) make a similar point in their discussion of the mechanisms whereby poverty makes people particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. These colleagues argue that while the first step in addressing this issue is to push for the economic regeneration of deprived communities, economic regeneration must be accompanied by social regeneration (i.e. programmes to repair the damage that poverty and racism have done to social capital in a particular community).

At this early stage of 'social capital's' conceptual development, I would also argue that it is premature to seek to use social capital as a causal variable in epidemiological models. Social capital is a context-specific process and product of particular people and places. Increasingly, cautious souls are pointing to the folly of

attempting to set up such a poorly defined, diffuse and context specific concept as a hard-nosed independent variable.

I use the concept of social capital quite extensively in applied research I am doing into the design and evaluation of community-led participatory HIV prevention programmes in South Africa squatter settlements in the Carletonville region. I also use it in academic research into community life in Luton, England. One common motivation of both research projects is a concern that too much talk about social capital has been generated by academics and policy-makers in ivory towers and offices, with too little effort being made to go out to the local communities that these academics and policy makers are talking about to see what is actually there.

In opposition to this top down approach, myself and colleagues are trying to develop the concept of social capital through active involvement in community development projects, and through micro-qualitative research in traditionally marginalised communities -- many of whom constitute the targets of social capital building exercises.

In both Luton and Carletonville the realities of local community life are far more complex than the concept of social capital can capture. Let me illustrate this with an example from our South African work with commercial sex workers on the gold mines (Campbell, 2000). Women work in conditions of extreme poverty and violence in shack settlements. Death and injury are a daily occurrence - from HIV, violent assaults, tuberculosis, alcohol poisoning and malnutrition. In these very desperate living conditions there is seldom a moment in women's lives where their physical safety and survival does not depend on the support and care of their colleagues. Thus for example women selling sex in the veldt are vulnerable to thieves who lie in wait in the bushes to surprise and rob people having sex. Clients sometimes pull out knives after the sexual transaction is finished and stab women who refuse to give them their money back. In such contexts one's physical survival often depends on having supportive colleagues standing by. At times of illness, death and hunger, the solidarity between women is extremely strong.

On the other hand there is consensus amongst sex workers that certain situations justify the total suspension of such trust and support. One such situation is the area of competition for clients, where it is not unusual for a woman to physically attack or even kill a colleague who 'steals' her regular client. Another such situation is when a woman is drunk. People repeatedly spoke of the importance of drinking as a survival strategy in harsh and bleak living conditions. It was accepted that when a woman was drunk she might harm another colleague, and there would be no hard feelings afterwards. Thus for example, several women in our study explained that their faces were scarred after drunken fights with friends, where women would break their beer bottles to use as weapons. When we expressed surprise that women continued to be friends with their attackers they were puzzled at our question, saying 'She was drunk when she did it, why would I blame her?'

How could a situation such as this one be encapsulated in a discrete measure of community level trust or reciprocity according to Putnam's dimensions? Is this a situation where levels of trust are high? Or low? Sometimes sex worker networks constitute positive social capital. At other times the very same networks are a source of the injury, even death, of their members. The notion of developing survey measures which seek to measure generalised levels of trust -- or the existence of supportive co-operative community networks -- as static context-free variables seems a flawed one.

Comparisons between the Luton and South African findings suggest that social capital is a resource that emerges in particular contexts in particular situations - generally in times of stress or crisis. When stress or crisis is absent, so is social capital. However, in life threatening conditions, communities may overcome tremendous barriers to work together in an atmosphere of trust and reciprocity to achieve common goals. In South Africa in the context of the HIV epidemic, against enormous odds, sex workers have generated trusted, easily accessible and often highly effective community networks (Campbell and Mzaidume, in press). They have mobilised people in voluntary groupings aimed at

preventing new HIV infections, offered support to those already infected, and facilitated people's access to medical facilities. In comparison to this, research in Luton suggested that local people were very doubtful about the possibility of deriving benefit from community-oriented actions or co-operative enterprises -- and had no interest in engaging in these (Campbell, Wood and Kelly, 1999).

In my view, our Luton findings point to the folly of our enterprise of searching for social capital out of any particular context. In our South African shack settlements, where levels of HIV are over 70%, sex workers have been able to generate very high levels of social capital in a very short time. In Luton, attempts to promote people's involvement in community development projects -- such as Neighbourhood Watches or grassroots anti-poverty forums, had left community development workers and grassroots local activists feeling tired and demoralised. Yet I have no doubt that if there was a large HIV epidemic in Luton, which threatened to kill 70% of the local population, people would pull together very co-operatively. Voluntary organisations would flourish - despite the low levels of general social capital we found in our Luton study which was conducted in non-crisis conditions. It's in particular situations of stress, need or crisis that social capital is generated.

It's against the background of all these qualifications and proviso's that I argue that social capital can often be a useful concept. In South Africa, we are using social capital as one modest but essential tool in a much broader study which seeks to locate the success or failure of our community led participatory programmes - which seek to prevent HIV transmission - within the broader context of poverty, government mismanagement and lack of political will on the part of powerful social actors to address the problem.

In my joint research with Carl McLean, we are looking at the role played by social capital in perpetuating social inequalities in England, again in Luton, with particular reference to ethnically determined health inequalities. Here too we feel that the concept of social capital has a vital role to play. Several key government policy documents, concerned with health inequalities, have emphasised the key importance of forming partnerships between

socially excluded communities and the government in addressing health inequalities (Dept Health, 199a, 199b; Social Exclusion Unit, 2000). The starting point of our Luton ethnicity research is our belief that forms of social exclusion -- such as minority ethnic status -- might impact negatively on the stocks of social capital available to minority ethnic group members -- in a way that undermines the likelihood that they will participate in health related or community strengthening projects. We are seeking to develop our argument that unless government 'consultation and partnership' policies take account of factors which undermine the likelihood of local participation by socially excluded groups, so-called community partnership exercises could actually serve to exacerbate health inequalities rather than reducing them.

This is the way in which we are seeking to use the concept of social capital to direct our attention to the frequently neglected community level of analysis within health promotion. In my view, if we tone down our unrealistically high expectations of social capital as a multi-disciplinary Grand Theory, the concept does have the potential to serve as a modest starting point for research seeking to conceptualise the community level of analysis in particular situations. In my research it has provided a useful starting point for two endeavours. The first is that of disentangling the role that community level factors may sometimes play in conjunction with a wide range of other micro- and macro- social factors in enabling and constraining marginalised people's participation in collaborative projects. The second endeavour is to examine how - in other situations, often situations of crisis, and even in the most disrupted and violent communities - social capital may indeed serve as the valuable community resource which Putnam argues it to be.

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IT AIN'T SOCIAL AND IT AIN'T CAPITAL

Ben Fine⁴ presented a talk entitled, 'It Ain't Social and It Ain't Capital'.⁵ We reproduce below a section of 'The Political Economist's Tale: Or, If Globalisation, (Welfare) State versus Market and Social Capital Are the Answers, Do We Have the Right Questions?', paper presented to two day conference organised at Deakin University, Melbourne on 'Civilising the State' on December 5/6th, 1999. All of his work on social capital is drawn together in, Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political Economy and Social Science at the Turn of the Millennium, London: Routledge, 2001.

Is Social Capital Promising?

In the previous section I have attempted to delineate an increasing influence of mainstream economics upon how welfare provision is understood, although the picture is complicated by continuing traditions inherited from the sociology of the welfare state and an unduly pessimistic and simplistic understanding of the limits imposed by globalisation. The extraordinary rise of social capital across the social sciences is marked by no less a mixture of influences. I have read so obsessively on this topic, and written so much already, that I will confine my remarks, in what is already an extremely lengthy paper, to a few assertions and polemical points.

First, what is striking about social capital is not only the extent of its influence, and the speed with which this has been achieved, but also its ready acceptance as both analytical and policy panacea. These features are aptly captured, respectively, by the World Bank's notion of social capital as 'missing link' and 'the glue that holds society together'. Social capital explains what is otherwise inexplicable and is the substance which allows society to function successfully. There are some parallels with utility as far as economists are concerned, for this also all-embracing - putatively explains why we behave the way we do as well providing us with

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⁵ This article was written whilst in receipt of a Research Fellowship from the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) under award number R000271046 to study The New Revolution in Economics and Its Impact upon Social Sciences.

our welfare. In the case of social capital, however, our sights and ambitions are raised from the level of the individual to the level of society.

Second, despite what is already a rush of survey articles, even those who are not using the term for the first time accept that it is difficult to define. The most recent contributions acknowledge this and pass on, usually adding a definition of their own to suit their own purpose. In short, the notion of social capital is chaotic as is also reflected in frequent suggestions that it is merely a metaphor or a heuristic device; it is also acknowledged to be difficult to measure (in a neat inversion of logic, World Bank projects seek to define it by the process of measuring it), to have what it is confused with what it does, and to be subject to be subject to perverse, dark, negative and down-sides.

Third, social capital has a gargantuan appetite. On the one hand, it can explain everything from individuals to societies (although global social capital has not yet figured to my knowledge, it ought to do so at least to address the international networks and ethos of those running the world) whether the topic be the sick, the poor, the criminal, the corrupt, the (dys)functional family, schooling, community life, work and organization, democracy and governance, collective action, transitional societies, intangible assets or, indeed, any aspect of social, cultural and economic performance, and equally across time and place. On the other hand, social capital has been deployed across theories and methodologies as diverse as postmodernist Marxism and mainstream neoclassical economics.

Fourth, although social capital is unlimited in principle in terms of what it can incorporate and address, and how it does so, the evolution of the literature in practice is far from neutral in terms of its content and direction, reflecting general intellectual fashions, the stimulus of external events, and even the idiosyncrasies of particular participants. What is equally important is what has been left out. As much of the critical literature has observed, contributions to social capital have tended to focus on civil society and its associational forms and ethos 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.

Fifth, more specifically in this intellectual trajectory, although Bourdieu is a (decreasingly) acknowledged initiator of the theory of social capital, the critical aspects of his contributions have been excised in deference to the tamer versions associated with the likes of Coleman and Putnam. In particular, Bourdieu has emphasised the social construction of the content of social capital (what is its meaning and how does this relate to its practices), that it is irreducibly attached to class stratification which, in turn, is associated with the exercise of economic and other forms of exploitation. Significantly, the functional approaches to social capital attached to the founding empirical studies of Coleman and Putnam have been shown to be questionable - respectively, catholic community as a positive influence on schooling outcomes and the incidence and impact of associational activity on differential regional development in Italy. In other words, false empirical observation has given rise to a theory which has subsequently taken on a life of its own as if both theory and data were mutually supportive. Such are the shaky foundations for the evolving knowledge attached to social capital.

Sixth, particularly important aspects of the intellectual environment in which social capital has flourished are the retreat from post-modernism (confrontation with the real without questioning the social construction of concepts), the revolution in and around economics (social capital as the complement to an otherwise unquestioned economic analysis), the relief in finding a way in which to engage critically with neo-liberalism and, more specifically, the emergence of the post-Washington consensus from the World Bank which has itself been extraordinarily active in promoting social capital, (to allow social to complement its economic engineering in adjustment programmes) and, last but not least, an academic environment of interdisciplinary specialisation and entrepreneurship. Social capital has accommodated spurious interdisciplinarity, lack of scholarship, and the regurgitation of old wine in new bottles for purposes of publication and funding.

Finally, the very terminology of social capital signifies its weaknesses. That the notion 'social' needs to be attached to capital to mark a distinct category of the latter is indicative of the failure to understand capital as social in its more mundane economic, putatively non-social, form. Of course, this ludicrous posture is at its most extreme in the case of mainstream economics for which capital is a physical or other asset which provides a stream of utility to individuals, a universal, ahistorical and asocial thing rather than a definite economic relationship, with associated structures and processes for the generation of profit. This all reflects a profound misunderstanding both of the social and of capital(ism). In a word, economists can bring in the social to complement the individual, only because the social has been omitted in the first instance. By the same token, to a lesser extent, whether influenced by a colonising economics or not, the same is true of the use of social capital across the other social sciences. It is designed to provide a corrective to the omission of some form of the social. It tends to do so, however, as previously indicated, by a neglect of precisely those economic (and often other) features of capitalism that need to be assessed prior to consideration of the designated concerns with which they interact and by which they are usually dominated. Significantly, social capital evolved out of a literature, and was initially designed, to address the relationship between the macro and the micro in the context of the relationship between the social and the individual. To a large extent, if not completely, these origins - and their generally strong affinities with rational choice methodology - have been glossed over in the ready reception granted to social capital as the cure-all for social theory.

Such arguments place in perspective the position of those who would accept much of the critical commentary on social capital but still consider it useful as long as the missing elements of class, conflict, power, context, etc are incorporated. Whether buttressed or not by strategic considerations of allowing an engagement with and away from neo-liberalism, it is apparent that such an approach is bordering on tautology. Any concept becomes acceptable as long as it is sufficiently refined to include all that it should. More significantly, the wish to refine social capital to incorporate what has been left out transparently indicates that what has been left out

should be the starting point for analysis and not social capital. As the old joke goes, if that's where we want to go, we would be better off starting from somewhere else!

GENDERED VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert⁶ and Sonia Reverter Bañon⁷

Introduction

The aim of this paper is threefold:

Firstly, we want to highlight the 'closed' nature of violence since gendered violence (a high-incidence and well documented phenomenon)⁸ often takes place in the private and personal sphere; a sphere which is not exposed to public scrutiny. We claim this is a circular process partly because the struggle against this kind of violence is complex, insufficient and apparently endless. We will suggest that this insufficiency is due to the fact that the means for fighting gendered violence, through policies and agency networks, only offer a means of assistance (psychological, medical, legal attendance) to the victims, and therefore have little impact in changing larger structures. As a consequence of the first aspect, we want to express the need to break up the circle of violence from stronger political positions, measures that could change the very patriarchal structure that supports the circle of violence in itself. The policies need to counteract the rooted social structures that promote violence.

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⁷ Universitat Jaume I, Spain

⁸ The UN reported in 1997 (in *The Progress of Nations*, a report from the United Nations Children's Fund) that 60 million women were victims of violence worldwide. Between one in five and one in seven women will be victims of rape in their lifetime. A quarter to half of all women has suffered physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner. As the report says, "in today's world, to be born a female is to be born high risk (and this) affects the social and economic development of all societies". Yet the report reveals that there is precious little national legislation that addresses gender-specific violence. Of 193 nations in the world, just over a quarter -44 countries- have enacted legislation against domestic violence, only 27 have laws against sexual harassment, and only 17 regard marital rape a crime. And even in those countries where legislation does exist, the challenge is to enforce law effectively.

Another UN figure suggested that over 74 million women are missing in South Asia, where Kamala Bhasin (feminist poet and singer), in *Times of India* (1999, July) suggested systematic patriarchal violence exists. In South Asia the male/female ratio has been reversed throughout the century with millions killed through female infanticide, foeticide, sati, dowry, lack of food, health services and economic deprivation. She mentioned institutionalized violence where the system had perpetrated repressive acts on women through the ages: foot binding in China, sati in India, witch burning in Europe, genital mutilation of women in Africa and gynecological violation of pregnant women in USA. Bhasin protests about violence against women in her book *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival*.

Secondly, we argue that interpersonal violence, often maintained through 'sheltering politics' (institutions and government structures) does not generate spaces for the accumulation of social capital, and if social capital is not assembled we cannot build networks for a common struggle against violence. It then becomes a circular process where both issues, interpersonal violence against women and generation of social capital, are closely related.

Thirdly, in specific political contexts, social capital built through alliances and networks on shared cultural idioms such as religion and caste, is used to exclude, marginalize and perpetuate violence (structural and interpersonal violence) on vulnerable 'others'. Through these ideas our analysis will highlight some of the difficulties of working with the concept of social capital, specifically in the context of violence. We explore these ideas through case studies of domestic violence and caste conflicts in North India.

We have framed our discussion within a feminist philosophy that is concerned with a committed reflection aimed to subvert the orders and structures that create and sustain situations of oppression and domination. This is a philosophy concerned with rethinking (thinking anew but also in a different way) societies and subjectivities to locate forms of resistance to the structures and situations that produce alienated and disempowered subjectivities. This is a philosophy that believes that we need to complement the current concept of power as 'power over' not only with the concepts of 'power to' and 'power with' (A. Allen, 1998), but also with the concept of 'power of being', meaning power to exist in a society that allows us to develop our individual subjectivities in liberty. 'Power' as a creative ability would also generate the key building blocks of social capital such as agency, empowerment and trust between individuals.

In recent debates, social capital has been understood as providing the 'potion' for social and larger development problems. Social capital consists of 'features of social organisation such as networks, norms and trust, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-coordinated actions' (R. Putnam, 1993:167). Social capital is different from physical and human capital in that it

accumulates rather than depreciates with use. Though it does not necessarily promote prosperity in economic terms, it does provide welfare or a better human existence to people. Investment in informal networks could be particularly useful for women who have been excluded from market and state mechanisms, while community participation can provide women with increased autonomy from domestic male dominance. J. Coleman took these ideas forward to emphasise that social capital consists of: 'some aspects of the social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of the individuals who are within that structure. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons' (J. Coleman, 1990: 302)⁹. We intend to focus on the key features of social/cultural capital and how these could alleviate the situation of women exposed to different forms of conflict and violence.

Some of the concerns and critiques of the concept of social capital have addressed the difficulties of measuring social capital, as well as the mechanisms through which social capital is generated and accumulated, and the often quoted 'dark side' or perverse form of social capital. However, social capital, it seems, has been addressed as a DIY process without any adequate analysis of the complexities of culturally specific contexts. Also, social capital is discussed in isolation without links with other forms of capital, for example economic and cultural capital that P. Bourdieu theorised.¹⁰

In this paper we try to locate some of the difficulties in working with the concept of social capital. The first set of idea we will discuss under the framework of SHELTERING POLITICS. This is exemplified through debates on domestic violence and multicultural policies of the state. The second set of ideas is through a framework called POLITICS OF CONFLICT. We will draw on the example of caste conflict particularly in Bihar, East India.

⁹ Coleman, cited in B. Edwards and M. Foley, "Civil Society and social capital beyond Putnam", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Sep. 1998, vol. 42, Issue 1, and Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, "The Downside of Social Capital", *The American Prospect*, No. 26 (May/June 1996).

¹⁰ Discussion of Bourdieu in Crompton, R (1993), *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*, (Cambridge: Polity Press)

SHELTERING POLITICS

It is increasingly being recognized both by academics and practitioners that we need to bridge the gaps between the ways in which violence is lived and the epistemology of violence (ways of knowing and reflecting about violence). Our perceptions, definitions and conceptualizations of violence are shaped through national, cultural and historical contexts.

Any form of violence leads to social, political or cultural exclusion and in culturally specific contexts also questions the sense of belonging that social groups adhere to. J. Galtung (1981, 1996)¹¹ delineates three types of violence: direct (physical), structural (violence in social structures: imperialism, nationalism, unsustainable development) and cultural (violence generated in the symbolic sphere). We believe that in these three interconnected conceptualizations of violence, cultural violence remains most stable, being little affected by feminist struggles. Through interconnected violence, social groups on the margins seem to be further excluded. Within these social groups, it is women and children rather than men that are affected. This is not to deny that men don't suffer from violence, one only has to look at the conflict in Sudan, Sierra Leone, and the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda where men are implicated in violence towards other men.

J.Galtung (1996:196) defines cultural violence as 'those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence –exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)– that can be used to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence'. Galtung also adds that these features are 'aspects of culture' (which can sometimes be protected by multicultural policies) not entire cultures. We would also argue that some of these 'aspects of culture' become vehicles for channeling and perpetuating what Pierre Bourdieu has called 'symbolic violence'. Religion is a key force in driving the Bourdieuan form of violence

¹¹ J.Galtung, *Peace by peaceful means. Peace and conflict, development and civilization*, 1996, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Sage Publications. See also Galtung, *Violence and its Causes*, Paris:UNESCO, 1981

Galtung's study on cultural violence 'highlights the way in which the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimised' and thus rendered acceptable in society. One of the ways cultural violence works is by changing the moral colour of an act from red/wrong to green/right or at least to yellow/acceptable; an example being the way in which acts of crime on behalf of the country are seen as right, justifiable, and perhaps patriotic but when instigated by oneself they are not. Thus the reality becomes opaque, so that we either cannot fully comprehend a violent act or do not see it as violent enough (J. Galtung, 1996: 196-197).

Galtung organises a triangle of violence: direct violence (an event), structural violence (a process), and cultural violence (an invariant, a permanent). We argue that this triangle works against women in three major ways at least. Firstly, besides having implications on survival and the well being needs of women, violence also questions individual identity and freedom, the two essential elements for building social capital. Fighting against violence means breaking up that triangle, something which is not an easy task because if patriarchal societies have created a 'glass ceiling' for efforts to improve outcomes for women, they have also created what we call a 'black box' for efforts to escape the triangle of violence against women. The political responses and policy frameworks fight only one of the angles of the triangle: the angle of direct violence. In this article we are signalling that we need to move from the physical aspect of violence to theorise other forms of violence.¹²

Secondly, choice and individual agency through which social capital is sustained is questioned in specific contexts.

¹² There is a whole feminist tradition of struggle against this victimist vision of policies against gendered violence. Among them one has to cite the "zero tolerance" campaign that began in Scotland in the early nineties, later extending to other parts of the United Kingdom. The principle of these campaigns was not to accept violence in any shape or form, however insignificant. This meant critically evaluating all aspects of violence against women (symbolic and cultural), and not just the physical aspects that until then had been the only ones addressed by public policies aimed at helping female victims of violence.

In a similar manner in the nineties the American feminist "take back the night" campaign propelled a general rejection of any victimist image or interpretation of the condition of women. In the same period in the USA the pornography debate significantly influenced this anti-victimist posture, opening feminist theory to wide-ranging viewpoints, some of which are polarised.

Thirdly, cultural-symbolic violence, associated with the ways in which public discourses, articulated and negotiated by the powerful, (particularly discourses of multiculturalism), affect the private lives of women.¹³ Violence in theoretical frameworks is often referred to as public or private violence but our analysis looks at the interconnectedness of the two spheres and how deliberations in the public sphere may impact on the private sphere.

If we take a specific example of domestic violence, (recognised as a human rights and international health issue), the social networks that help and encourage women's moves towards claiming control over their lives as well as provide a 'fall back position' are palliative measures: freefone lines, shelters, medical care, psychological and legal assistance. All these measures are normally addressed to women who are already the object of abuse and aggression and are at most times just to assist the victim. As a consequence women are seen by state institutions and society in general as in need of assistance. This means that the victims are the ones who are normally 'under treatment' and who have to change their lives and adapt themselves as 'victims', the ones who have to look for a solution to 'their' problem. The woman is often obliged to move away from her home in order to live away from the aggressor, who normally continues to stay at home, at least at the beginning. We claim that there is a need to relocate domestic violence as a case of political violence against women. The current vision of political parties with programmes that do no more than integrate palliative policies without any other framework of political change is currently failing to ameliorate the situation of battered women. It is clear that all these policies can be seen as part of the 'social capital' produced in advanced democratic societies, and therefore it is sometimes difficult to see how they do not help victimised battered women. This is actually one of the most striking aspects of modern societies as it is described from a *Foucaultian* analysis. Violence against women can be theorised from this perspective as a method of maintaining power and control over women. And even if this method remains distinctly

¹³ Foucault believed that power in politics and art is gained through discourse and that claims to objectivity made on behalf of specific discourses are always spurious. There are absolutely no true discourses, only more or less powerful ones.

'pre-modern' in nature¹⁴, the social institutions created by modern forms of power may revictimise battered women. As Andrea Westlund (1999) points out in a recent article analyzing domestic violence from the Foucaultian concept of power, modern institutions, dependent upon what we call here *sheltering politics*, 'often revictimize battered women by pathologizing their condition and treating them as mentally unhealthy individuals who are incapable of forming legitimate appraisals of their situations and exercising rational agency of their lives' (A. Westlund, 1999: 1046). Instead of empowerment and agency 'sheltering politics' provides a system of 'surveillance and normalizing judgment', in Foucaultian terms. Different disciplines studying the problems involving violence, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, legal studies, have been re-describing women's abnormalities, pathologising in that way women who are just victims of male dominance disorders¹⁵, created and supported at the same time by patriarchal cultures that allow female domination.

The fact that current policies against domestic violence are palliative ones shows that they deal with women when they are already victims, only after they have denounced their situation, when the situation is desperate. This is the therapeutic approach that we want to replace. From our point of view this shows that the problem is being addressed from a patriarchal structure that might assist women but that it leaves the political situation unchanged. Palliative measures against violence fall short in providing permanent safety or genuine empowerment to survivors of domestic violence. It is precisely the aspects of agency and empowerment that we consider a key aspect in fighting against violence and therefore in creating a system of social capital more efficient in producing just communities.

¹⁴ Following the description of Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish*, the pre-modern power is characterized by using violence that it is intensely corporal and brutal, wielded in a personal manner. Modern power is defined by using violence in a more anonymous, invisible, and lighter way. Disciplinary institutions and practices would follow this pattern, which is "less violent", more invisible and diffuse, but extremely invasive. Veena Das (1990) raises the idea of diffused hostilities, which get conjoined in a bigger conflict.

¹⁵ See Paula Caplan's article "How do they decide who is normal? The bizarre, but true, tale of the DSM Process", 1991, *Canadian Psychology*, 32 (2). In this article the psychologist Caplan criticises the practices of the diagnostic categorization followed by mainstream mental institutions and established by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM). In her article Caplan shows a sexist bias in the DSM, pathologising women with disorders that are often caused by their male partner's pathological behaviour towards them.

The structural definition of Bourdieu (1980) and Coleman (1988)¹⁶ leans towards a concept of social capital which refers to a set of resources that are available to the individual and which derive from his/her participation in social networks. For this reason, it seems that a key aspect of social capital is that it has to facilitate certain actions of individuals who are located within that social structure.

Taking a more dispositional definition of social capital, we will consider that this is a subjective phenomenon integrated by individuals whose values and attitudes determine how to relate to each other (K. Newton: 1997; D. Stolle: 2000). From this perspective, social trust is the key element (measured by a moral judgment that leads an individual to think that most people are worthy of trust). This definition of social capital is strongly related to the concept of political culture (as claimed in the work of R. Putnam, 1993).

Within the perspective of 'sheltering politics' there is no development of trust in mistreated and battered women, as the following two elements are missing:

- Empowerment of the subject. Sheltering policies do not facilitate women's actions within the structure. Women who have been the object of violence are effectively the ones who are separated from normal social networks and are isolated in an environment of shelter and protection that frequently cripples their identity (while men usually remain in the family home).
- A change in the civic political culture. In fact, the phenomenon of violence against women, in its wide-ranging typology, is increasing worldwide, showing that there has been no major change either in structures or in civic culture.

¹⁶ According to Coleman (1988), the first application of the concept of social capital is to be found in G. Loury (1977), who used it to refer to family relations as being useful to the cognitive and social development of the child and during adolescent. Currently, the concept developed within social science by the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, underlines the role of social trust, or interpersonal trust, in varied cases.

We consider that we should not abandon palliative measures, but combine them with a political programme that copes with the problem from its very foundations. A political action that can fight against domination and oppression, not only assisting the victims, but preventing the problem. Sheltering politics is only useful when there are victims, empowerment politics (the alternative view that we are proposing) has sense when there are persons who are systematically disempowered. Ameliorative measures only kick into action at a later stage of the violent process. Our analysis projects this as an incomplete process, given that as the only political measures taken by governments they are by no means enough. Sometimes even they hide the real solution, since governments adduce that they are actually doing a great deal, investing public money to fight against domestic violence, when the real issue is that they might be doing a lot, but they are not doing it well. With the logic of sheltering politics alone, many women can be labelled as 'future victims'. This is a logic that perpetuates the domination of women, since it leaves the real causes of violence against women invisible. Potential spheres that feed into violence such as deprivation, poverty, social exclusion and social problems such as alcoholism and drug taking, seen as pockets which normally would generate a 'victim' are often sidelined to focus on the 'produced victim'. Women remain objects in need of protection, if not by a man, by an institution, by the state, by the welfare public system. These constitute the modern institutions that, according to M. Foucault (1979), are grounded in the idea of surveillance and discipline.

All these measures are normally part of programmes framed in the politics of social affairs ministries, which, in most cases, are considered a minor office in the configuration of the government. We are not condemning palliative measures, but saying that they are insufficient and a long way from removing the structures that allow violence against women. Consequently, we argue that it is difficult to build networks, interpersonal trust and the associated social capital when we fall short of institutional trust and norms that regulate these social interactions. We would also suggest that the 'horizontal networks' that both statutory and voluntary sectors aspire to can not fully comprehend the violence since they focus only on physical violence. Finally, we ask, how can we turn our

modern institutions into institutions capable of facilitating agency, empowerment and resistance to any kind of violence?

The fiability of a social structure creates trust in individuals while, at the same time, creating social capital. According to J. Coleman (1988), one of the most important aspects of generating this fiability of a social structure is the closure of the structure, meaning the capacity of that structure to impose external effects upon the others (limiting the negative external effects or stimulating the positive ones through norms that are generated by the same structure).

In relation to our case of palliative or sheltering policies for fighting against gendered violence, we think that there is no such closure in the social structure implied in those policies. Firstly, because in general they only relate to the angle of the triangle of violence that concerns the physical. Secondly, because even in these cases there is not a clear generation of norms that systematically limit the actions of the aggressors in a sufficient manner, as there is no clear stimulus to women to encourage them to empower their own subjectivity to be able to escape the situation of violence and domination.

We need a wide range of state sponsored support to give women the conditions to overcome the circle of violence. But this shouldn't be confused with a protective role of the state, since this is based on the idea of victimization that we have been criticising. The intervention of the democratic state into domestic violence is designed both to rescue and protect women from violent men and to constitute the rights of women not to be abused (A.Yeatman, 1997). A simple protectionist approach of the state operates in such a way that women are not constituted as agents. 'Victim status' is the suppression of the agency of the subjects and the disempowerment of women. Only subjects with individual agency and a political relationship with society and power (the opposite of 'victim status') can build social capital. But individual agency is something that requires to be socially constituted and supported ('here we have a circle'). The feminist counter discourse, as a discourse of resistance to violence and to the patriarchy that supports violence, needs to be based on empowerment and

construction of agency. Agents own needs are tied together in all their socially oriented actions ('insisting on the inseparability of the self and other'). But we cannot build frameworks, as A.Yeatman (1997: 155) states, 'without the power of the democratic state to constitute and underwrite women's agency or capacities as persons in their own right'.

The state has to encourage the creation of social capital establishing the necessary guarantees for the development of relations of trust. It is evident to us that with policies in existence which victimize women who are the object of violence (and by extension victimisation and disempowerment of all women) states are not allowing that development. The state also has to develop civic virtue, meaning the concern of citizens for common interests above and beyond the merely personal. And this needs to be performed in an environment of equality, since without equality there is no possibility of trust.

It is what from other perspectives has been called the repolitization of society and the state. In the process we would need to reconceptualise what we want 'citizenship activity' to mean and to clarify what counts as political activity. We agree with some feminists that the concept of politics and the concept of citizenship attached has to be of the type that includes active participation in civic and political life, its social implications, along with important aspects of social standing and dignity. Along with Uma Narayan we believe that 'feminists need to insist on the connections between issues of decent education, reproductive rights, affordable childcare and equal access to the work place and our collective social need to promote the active political participation of all citizens' (1997: 58). As Seyla Benhabib strongly points out it is wrong to segregate the political from the civic. It is in the constant transition from civic to political that citizenship is applied. This is what Benhabib¹⁷ refers to with the concept of 'enlarged mentality': 'Such an enlarged mentality, which I see as a *sine qua non* for democratic citizenship, presupposes the virtues of membership and association, the ability to negotiate conflicting perspectives

¹⁷ S.Benhabib held first this position in *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, 1994, New York and London: Routledge and Polity. The quote is from "Political membership in the global era", in *Social Research*, vol.66, no.3 Fall 1999.

and loyalties, and the ability to distance oneself from one's most deeply held commitments in order to consider them from the hypothetical standpoint of a universalistic morality' (1999: 729). We believe that it is the role of the democratic state to constitute citizenship in this very frame of 'enlarged mentality', allowing the flourishing of agency and of social capital all together. It is the loss of the agency that has to be regained in the process of repolitisation of the issue of violence against women, and it is precisely because of this reason that we find 'sheltering politics' problematic. As A. Westlund posits, with the palliative and protective approach of the state we 'run the risk of positioning battered women as mere clients requiring physical and psychological care/management. What is lost when this happens is a recognition of survivors as political agents with real contributions to make to what is, after all, a political struggle' (A. Westlund, 1999: 1062).

Repolitisation of the issue of violence also needs to be accompanied with a broader understanding of the mechanisms through which violence becomes 'physical'. They have to be understood in terms of a larger framework of what Veena Das has called 'diffused hostilities' that get conjoined for 'collective action' and erupt at particular historical/political junctures. Though Das analyses violence in the specific context of ethnic/caste and communal conflicts in South Asia her framework is useful to understand some aspects of interpersonal violence, particularly domestic violence. The concept of 'diffused hostilities' explains the embeddedness of violence in social structures and cultural practices. However, to understand the mechanisms of this embeddedness, particularly in the private sphere, we would argue, it is important to do so through Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence. We would suggest that these 'diffused hostilities' are primarily nurtured through symbolic violence and can also help us to understand both physical violence and how cultures of violence are created. The household domain constitutes the social field whereby individuals compete for the 'same stake'. Gaining distinction in this gendered social field depends on one's accumulated social, economic and cultural capital, one's habitus and legitimacy as a player in that field. Those who have symbolic power (through symbolic capital) as P. Bourdieu (1986) argues,

legitimate, maintain and assert that power through symbolic violence.¹⁸ For example, symbolic capital can be acquired through education (cultural capital) and through acquisition of material sources (economic capital).

Ironically, much as the domestic sphere is the main site of gendered violence so is it an important site for accumulation and transmission of social capital. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that 'the family is the first building block in the generation of social capital for the larger society'. Women are projected as the chief agents in this capital building. However, intra and inter familial dynamics and hierarchies of generational power affect the generation of social capital and suggest that the relationship between women and social capital could be more tenuous than it appears. In a family where there is interpersonal violence it will not be possible to build the necessary networks that enable the family to benefit from social capital, independently of the human capital that the members of the family possess.

Institutional structures which offer 'palliative measures' in some situations (outlined earlier) could also generate further violence within households through policies that they adhere to and protect, particularly multicultural policies. Intra family dynamics need to be foregrounded since the domestic sphere could become both a site of cultural transmission as well as a site of violence if protected by multicultural policies.

A lot of otherwise informative research on violence is documented without an adequate analysis of the concept of the public and private and how public policy debates shape the way we understand violence particularly violence, in the domestic sphere. This paper is an attempt to move beyond the dichotomous categories of private and public and to indicate the ways in which public life informs the private domain. Moreover, if we account for domestic violence as political violence then we could also develop

¹⁸ Within a broader political framework, symbolic violence can de-legitimate and discount other cultural practices. Women (viewed as custodians of culture) in many cultures are chief players in this field and often align with men in perpetuating symbolic violence. In a broader framework, it also raises the question whether women make social and political investments with men rather than women of different cultures.

an understanding how public discourses inform private lives and unconsciously perpetuate interpersonal violence: how these discourses can be analyzed as discourses of violence.

The responsive multicultural¹⁹ stance (to protect cultural diversity) by the British government and other European governments leaves the question of gender equality within ethnic communities undressed. Susan Muller Okin (1997) has argued that minority cultural groups, like the societies in which they exist, are themselves gendered with substantial differences of power and advantage between men and women, thus making group rights for minority cultures inconsistent with the liberal values of individual freedom. What is of immediate importance is that advocates of group rights give little attention to the domestic sphere. This, she argues, is inconsistent with the fact that culture is mainly transmitted at home, and identities of men and women are primarily shaped through the domestic sphere. Moreover, the central focus of most cultures is related to the spheres of the personal, sexual and reproductive life. Religious groups are often particularly concerned with 'personal law' - the laws of marriage, divorce, child custody, control of family property and inheritance. If cultural practices are defended then they will impact on the lives of women more than men. Women's roles endorsed by group rights could lead to unequal distribution of responsibilities in the domestic sphere as well as unequivocal share of power. These debates on multiculturalism also feed into an institutional stance

¹⁹ The concept of multiculturalism has arisen from existing debates on cultural imperialism and cultural relativism. In the former, the issue of diversity and difference was contested not only through the different spatial locations but also through a history of colonialism. The cultural practices of the colonised were often used to suggest the inappropriateness of self rule. The viewpoint adopted was primarily from a white western tradition and location. The concept of cultural relativism, did not necessarily imply freedom from oppression because under a garb of cultural relativism we could preserve a patriarchal culture (N.J.Hirshman, 1997). We now debate multi-culturalism whereby different cultures, particularly minority cultures, can exist in liberal democracies. Susan Moller Okin (1997) problematises the concept of group rights, protected under multicultural policies. Though these policies may protect cultural traditions of minority cultures, they do not necessarily enable gender equality. Women's rights may be subsumed within the overarching group rights. However, we will argue that all the three concepts are problematic. Within cultural imperialism, we can see how alliances were made between natives and imperialists. Cultural relativism is criticised for its Western epistemic knowledge and stand point (vid U. Narayan, 1989). This is best understood through the practice of veiling. The notion of veiling does not signify universal gender oppression. It offers the choice to women or could be one amongst limited choices. In North Nigeria, in Zamphara and Kaduna, Muslims have introduced the Islamic law of the Shariat; while in southern Nigeria the Christian majority does not accept this tradition. Women feel that *shariat* brings protection to them and feels segregation as a tool against harassment of women. Multiculturalism, we argue is problematic because it does not account for contexts of politically specific conflicts whereby individual rights and community rights are intermeshed and women act on behalf of their communities.

of the police and the judiciary that a policy of non-interference should be maintained in the private sphere.²⁰

Development and social policy debates need to be informed of not only the social exclusion experienced by minority groups but also how women and children are further socially excluded within these groups through the cultural and religious practices of religious communities.²¹ In other words, the culturally specific environment could either promote or hinder development of women. For example, the World Bank report (1997) commented on the high incidence of domestic violence in Muslim communities in South Asia. It was explained as a result of perceived cultural transgressions made by Muslim women or women's resistance to coercive control exercised over a wide range of activities such as access to money, to her right to decide when, where and how sexual relations occur. Middle class Muslim women are caught up in the contradictory forces of achieving economic independence through entering the market economy as well as maintaining their 'respectability', indicative of their social privilege and social status as opposed to the economic privilege. Within the context of western societies, these transgressions can become more apparent and violence could appear to be sanctioned through 'public' debates on protection of culturally specific and religious practices (for example women's non-visibility in the public space), which further destabilise the 'private' lives of women.

POLITICS OF CONFLICT

Ethnic configurations and associated dynamics of belonging can also operate in a way that excludes others from assessing resources. In other words social mechanisms which facilitate and build specific codes of community behaviour could lead to co-related behaviours, but do not necessarily lead to socially desirable behaviours' (S. Durlauf, 1999: 2). In specific political contexts, communities, organized around issues of class, caste or religion can build community networks (social capital) to exclude 'other' communities, thus perpetuating both structural and interpersonal

²⁰ *vid* in Editorial, *Gender and Development*, 1998: Vol.6, No.3, November, p.5.

²¹ Religion is an important part in determining the culture, social interaction and behaviour patterns, which is maintained by multiculturalism.

violence. Any form of capital, Bourdieu (1986) argues, has to be recognised and legitimised for it to be traded as symbolic capital. De-legitimization does not allow cultural capital to be traded as an asset. Those participants in the social world who acquire symbolic capital can then exercise symbolic power or domination (Lovell et al, 1997: 270). Those in the social field 'whose culture lacks recognition, within that particular field, are subject to symbolic violence'. If one has to measure the efficacy and efficiency of social capital then we need to understand its relevance in historically contextualised, politically specific situations. We discuss the example of caste conflicts in North India, in the states of Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. These states also share high levels of illiteracy and poverty in general.

Caste is a social institution of Hindu society, historically associated with four castes, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. It has been a contested and much debated social science conceptual category (M.N. Srinivas, 1996; U. Sharma, 1999). Constitutional protection was provided by the Indian state governments to certain backward castes (Shudras) on the basis of ownership of land, access to education and poverty levels.²² Reservations were provided in government jobs, political parties and educational institutions. Coupled with this, the right to vote for all, made the backward castes realise their power. Some backward castes (the cream of the backward castes) in North India such as the Yadavs and Kurmis in Bihar (Jats in Rajasthan and Haryana) came to acquire land, education and also became economically fluent. They also strategically used government reservations to improve their own status and become politically strong. These affluent backward castes have been referred to as Upper Shudras or 'bullock capitalists' (M. Jain, 1996: 138). The efforts of a government (politically unstable) to build networks to aid social advancement among lower castes were thus hijacked by a few politically aware

²² In the last two decades the picture of caste relations has been further complicated through the new parliamentary laws on reservation of seats for "socially backward" communities. Though reservations succeeded in improving the morale of the Schedule Caste's (socially backward), the principle of merit was debated since suitable applicants could not obtain professional positions because of the reservation quota. It was argued that an approach that highlighted an economic criteria and not exclusively caste identity was beneficial so that those socially and economically comfortable but in a low caste would not monopolise the system. Reservations have worked best in South India but arguably too well as with some power taken out of Brahmin hands it has led to further clamour for power and money. The lower castes despite reservations have to still overcome the socially stigmatic barriers. (*Times of India*, Delhi 1996).

stronger lower castes, who also acquired both economic and cultural capital. These affluent castes build social networks among themselves to exclude the others, particularly the *Dalits*. A. Portes and P. Landolt (1996) have argued that 'if social capital is a resource or gain accumulated through social ties and networks, then we need to also know that some resources that people claim come at the expense of others: the same ties that help members of a group often enable it to exclude others'.

The *dalits*,²³ the worst off lower castes (poor and landless) who were caught between the upper castes and the upwardly mobile newly rich backward castes were left with nothing and formed alliances and networks with the extreme left Naxalite groups to fight the social hegemony of higher castes in general but more importantly the economic and political hegemony of the affluent backward castes. Because of the exclusion they face it has been easier for them to form an all India *Dalit* identity forming 25% of population in most places (U. Sharma, 1999: 48).

Gender dynamics within the institution of caste had not been analyzed comprehensively, probably because of the complex and tenuous relationship between the two. Women often are assigned the responsibility of maintaining the household as well the occupational continuity of the particular caste. The women are the chief custodians of the domestic domain and have to abide and inculcate cultural practices which sustain the distinctions and 'ritual status' in the caste hierarchy. (L. Dube, 1996: 5-9). Rituals of food, purity and pollution associated primarily around issues of marriage and sexuality delineate the hierarchies in the caste system. What is perhaps interesting from a gender perspective is that the hierarchy between the sexes is less rigid in the lower castes than in the upper castes. Lower caste women not only have to make economic contributions but also participate in 'polluting' tasks like the men folk for the upper castes. For example, occupational activities such as midwifery and washing dirty clothes (L. Dube, 1996: 10). The other issue that is pertinent for this discussion is the perception of the female body as more vulnerable

²³ Dalits have also been referred as untouchables and Harijans. The practice of untouchability has a historical past and while there has been "status fluidity" in the middle sections of lower castes, the untouchables still remain on the margins of lower castes (U. Sharma, 1999: 48)

to 'pollution' than the male counterpart. Sexual transgressions are more serious for a woman because she undergoes 'internal pollution' which pollutes her indefinitely whereas the man 'incurs external pollution which can be washed off' (L.Dube, 1996:10). This also follows a *dictum* that 'superior seed can fall on an inferior field but an inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field' (L.Dube, Ibid). Associated with these principles around purity and pollution, management of female sexuality then becomes important for maintaining caste status.

Two associated ideas emerge from these caste-associated patterns. Firstly, it is easier for lower caste women to cross the boundaries between the public and private and secondly, rape in caste conflicts becomes a weapon through which 'purity', particularly in upper castes is challenged. The present day conflicts in Bihar's 'lawless countryside' in which lower caste women are the chief arm bearers and responsible for most of the inter-caste killings is a vivid reflection of caste dynamics associated with historically rooted structural inequalities. Bihar's past is crowded with instances of brutal attitudes towards *Dalit* women from the upper castes, organized under the *Ranveer Sena Party* (private army of landlords). The women have been taught to retaliate as well as defend themselves.²⁴ They undergo a basic 'rifle training' to aim at human targets. The army of the backward castes is the *Dalit Sena Army* and it has its women's wing. The Sena started training women since 1994 and since then there has been a marked drop in atrocities towards women. Approximately 8000 women in 500 villages in Bihar have been given the basic arms training (*India Today*, 1998: August 31).

Social capital is not only being used in a perverse way but is being accumulated to challenge what Bourdieu calls the *symbolic power* of the upper castes which they have acquired through cultural and

²⁴ There is another side to these killings. In Bhojpur (Bihar) in incidences of violence and counter-violence, widows feel that they are caught between the wars from which mostly politicians derive gains. The women, once widowed are ill treated by their in-laws. A survey suggested that there are 149 women in the age group of 19-60 of all castes who were widowed in Liberation Party and Ranveer Sena Party (private army of landlords) violence in six blocks of Bhojpur between 1990-1997. Out of these 149 families, 91 have been reduced to a sub-human level and 55 have somehow been able to just survive. Ironically the women themselves do not know what political affiliation they have. They have said: "we wish to die, but death does not come to us- though we do die everyday" (*Times of India*, Lucknow, 1999).

economic capital. The attributes and benefits of social capital (networks, associations) are used to gain legitimacy over other forms of capital which the higher castes have accumulated and gained. Bourdieu's analysis (1980, 1986) of the juxtaposition of different capitals (high in economic but low on cultural capital) can be useful to locate the ways in which different 'capitals' are used against each other to meet specific political agendas.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper signals towards the polarity, which has developed between analysis and practice on issues of violence. If we understand a vision of the democratic process as being civil, cooperative, and tolerant, we need to conclude that our democracies are failing. Politics needs to be engaged with the demand of greater responsiveness and accountability on the part of the state, and also greater control of the consequences of global economic impact on the ability of both state and civil society to respond to citizens demands. We are aware that this task needs the *resignification* of some concepts, among them: the concept of violence (we have tried to do so in this paper), the concept of politics, public and private sphere, agency (individual and collective), development, and social capital. This resignifying task is exactly what we believe the feminist struggle consists of.

Values held by sheltering politics and politics of conflict neither create social capital nor solve the problem. If values and norms are the essential building blocks of social capital, then they need to enable agency to be exercised. We cannot build a concept of social capital which is unable to transform the expectations, hopes and rights of the excluded; a concept incapable of breaking up the binary divisions between inclusion and exclusion. In short, we cannot define a concept of social capital that does not refer to the set of values that allows individual and communal development in their widest sense. Women are often placed in a contradictory position. Through the case study of sheltering politics, we see how women trapped in the circle of violence cannot generate social capital to fight violence. On the other hand, through the case study of caste conflicts, women generate social networks or 'perverse' social capital to perpetuate violence and socially exclude other

communities, on behalf of their own caste groups. Women are key builders of social capital, but what they do with this capital also needs to be brought under scrutiny.

From a feminist perspective this means the necessity of overcoming violence against women, in all its varied typology and scope. Whatever the definition of social capital, it has to be embedded in structures that do not generate barriers to the agency, freedom and choice of women. As Nancy Hirschman (1997) strongly states 'the ultimate barrier to women's freedom would be patriarchy, or the social, legal, and economic power that men are accorded over women, and which validates individual men's choices to use violence as a means of control' (1997: 204). For this reason, we see the need to deconstruct the ideological support of violence, empowering the non-violent values of the different cultural landscapes. In a violent and unequal environment there is no possibility of trust, the key element of social capital.

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SOCIAL CAPITAL: A POST-TRANSITION CONCEPT?

Questions of context and gender from a Latin American Perspective

Maxine Molyneux²⁵

Introduction

Following its enthusiastic endorsement by the World Bank and other development agencies in recent years, social capital has found a ready application within Latin American policy arenas. It has framed development projects and inspired scholarly reflection both supportive and critical. If the World Bank has taken the lead in this area, United Nations agencies have followed in its wake. A major UN regional conference sponsored by ECLAC, was held in Chile at the end of 2001 on the theme of 'Social Capital and Poverty Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean'²⁶. Its subtitle, 'Toward a New Paradigm' was indicative as much of the hopes invested in the concept as of the interest it commands. In these respects social capital, in Latin America, emulating its rapid progress elsewhere in the world.

Yet as both its critics and supporters acknowledge, social capital remains a contested concept²⁷ and, despite some methodological refinements, difficult to operationalise in research and policy settings²⁸. Nonetheless, there are reasons to applaud the interest in social capital by development agencies. Insofar as it signifies an albeit partial shift from more orthodox development approaches which aim to 'get the economy right' (while ignoring their effects on the social fabric), it is widely seen as signalling a welcome, if

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²⁶ Opened by former sociologist, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, and co-sponsored by the University of Michigan. Among those who presented papers were Francis Fukuyama and Hernán de Soto.

²⁷ Suffice to compare some of these definitions: 'Social capital is a resource for individual and collective actors located in the network of their more or less durable social relations' (Adler:nd); contrast with the Coleman school which utilises a rational-actor, utility maximising model.

²⁸ The World Bank has sponsored the refinement of analytic instruments used in large scale studies. But see Foley and Edwards 1999 for a review and critique of 44 empirical studies using social capital and Fine's broader methodological critique in Fine 2001. For useful critical discussions of the concept social capital from a variety of viewpoints see *inter alia*: Adler, u.d. Evans, 1996, Fine, 2001, Harriss and de Renzio 1997, Foley and Edwards 1999, Portes and Landholt 2000, Putzel 1997, Woolcock 1998.

belated engagement with the 'social' (Woolcock 1998, Portes, 1998). Since social theorists have long been arguing against the false abstraction of economic from social processes and feminist economists have spent much time and effort in exposing the gendered character of economic processes and their effects, we might expect the take up of social capital in the field of development to converge productively with these efforts to place social processes more squarely in the policy domain.

In focusing on forms of social solidarity, social capital has some potential to enrich development debates. Studies of networks, community ties and kinship are important in refining policy approaches to poverty alleviation and these have been joined in more recent times by research on the use made of social capital by migrants and by ethnic entrepreneurs. Social capital approaches have brought to the attention of development agencies the quality of the local social fabric, the importance of forms of solidarity and co-operation, and they can also reveal the effects - positive and negative - of development projects on the communities they are intended to assist. If networks, associations, and local knowledges are recognised as valuable development resources that agencies must take account of when devising environmental, development or welfare projects then surely this can only be viewed as positive. However, much depends on how social capital is understood and operationalised, and what value is attached to its importance in bringing about satisfactory outcomes.

My concern here is not to rehearse the origins, or the strengths and weaknesses of social capital as a concept. There exists an extensive scholarly literature on these issues which has, among other things, sought usefully to distinguish between different concepts of social capital and the different theoretical paradigms that they imply²⁹. This literature necessarily informs the discussion that follows, but in focusing upon policy settings I highlight some particular problems in the way the concept is applied to development. However theoretically sophisticated the various scholarly treatments of social capital may be, in policy settings much is lost

²⁹ Notably charting its often forgotten origins in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, through to the worldwide prominence achieved by Robert Putnam's books and articles. For histories and varying usages of the concept see inter alia Fine 2001, Portes 1998, and Woolcott 1998.

in translation and conceptual refinements banalised. Social capital has been described with some justification as a 'deliberately fuzzy concept', its imprecision allowing it to function as a 'convenient peg for different agendas' (Renzo and Harriss 1997 p.921). Analytic concepts are always contested and bear different meanings; it is generally those with interpretative power who are able to give them content and who influence how they are applied 'in the field'.

In considering the integration of social capital into development agendas, I focus on some issues that have a particular salience from a gender perspective. Social capital approaches have been remarkably silent on gender: one has only to check the World Bank's dedicated website readings to verify this³⁰, but it is also generally true of the scholarly literature to date. It is perhaps noteworthy in this respect that the advance of social capital in the Bank seems to have proceeded independently of the work of its Gender Unit. Its Policy Research Report Engendering Development published in 2001 does not discuss social capital, and there is not even an index entry on the subject. This is no oversight but rather reflects a difference in approach: the Gender Unit report occupies a different analytic terrain to social capital, preferring to focus on 'rights, resources and voice', where resources are understood in largely economic terms³¹.

The following discussion considers some of the workings and effects of this displacement of gender from the efforts to place social capital in development policy. It focuses on three issues that tend to be sidelined and which have specific relevance from a gender perspective: the first is contextual, locating the broader significance of the shift in development policy which has brought social capital closer to the mainstream. The second is the issue of social inequality - in this case gendered inequality - in social capital approaches, and the third is the question of the politics, including the gender politics, that are involved in operationalising

³⁰ A World Bank website dedicated to social capital was set up in 1998 (www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital).

³¹ It is striking that the most prominent and enthusiastic proponents of social capital seem to be overwhelmingly male, when they are not specialists on the family. At the CEPAL conference in Chile it was reported to me by a senior participant that there was a 'marked division between the enthusiastic men and the sceptical women participants'.

social capital approaches. The following discussion will review these issues with specific reference to the Latin American region.

Latin America: Civil Society and the Post-Adjustment Policy Agenda

As is evident and increasingly acknowledged in the social capital literature, whether understood as a property of society ('civicness'), as a property of a community, or as a resource operationalised by individuals to maximise their ability to attain specific goals, - social capital takes markedly different forms in different contexts. The social capital of bowling clubs and sewing groups in the United States is clearly not the social capital of the poor in Latin America, and its benign as well as its negative or destructive forms can only be adequately grasped in relation to specific political and social formations and development strategies, both local and global.

Latin America seems to many observers in the development field to have a comparatively resilient stock of social capital, or put differently, a fairly active civil society³². To the extent that this is true - if exaggerated at times - of some countries in the region, there are important historical and political reasons which account for it. Long before social capital and its policy derivative, 'participation'³³ became an integral part of development policies, the Catholic church and the left were engaging in forms of community development and activism through the Christian Base Communities. At the same time, a tradition of populist clientelism in place from the 1930s in countries like Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, nurtured co-operative links with communities which converged with development initiatives to meet basic needs by sustaining local networks³⁴ and community mobilisation. The decades of transition from authoritarian dictatorship which began in Brazil in the mid-1970s and culminated with the end of seven

³² All things are of course relative, and Latin America's civil society activism is scattered, largely urban, discontinuous and differs markedly among countries.

³³ The development of participatory approaches owed much to Chambers 1983, and to Cernea's work 1991. For a critique of the way these approaches are applied in development practices see Cook and Kothari 2001.

³⁴ Networks are recurrent patterns of face to face interactions usually involving expectations of reciprocal assistance.

decades of one-party rule in Mexico in 2000, promoted the development of a wide range of social movements and fostered an active associational life in many countries of the region. Women's movements were a notable feature of civil society activism with feminist and popular grass roots movements interacting with sometimes extensive political mobilisation of women in parties, protest movements and over issues of collective consumption³⁵.

What is today generally understood as 'social capital', - (networks, forms of associational activity) - and in development projects is operationalised as 'participation' - is not a new area of interest or of policy in Latin America. What is new, is that these concerns have moved from the margins of development practice to occupy a more central place in international and regional policy arenas. The 'new development agenda', the policies that have evolved since the turn to political and economic liberalism from the 1980s, have combined elements of 'bottom up development' - notably participation and decentralisation, - with an ongoing programme of economic restructuring which has resulted in growing social inequality and persistent levels of poverty. The ambivalent character of this 'new agenda' combining policy instruments that exist in apparent contradiction lies at the heart of the debate over the uses made in development practice of social capital approaches.

In Latin America as elsewhere, the new development agenda originated in a series of policy shifts usually summed up as the 'ascendancy of neo-liberalism' or the Washington Consensus. The structural adjustment and stabilisation measures designed to contain the debt crisis of the 1980s, were accompanied by the familiar package of privatisation, export-led growth, deregulation of the economy and reduction of the sphere of state responsibilities. However, the global turn to democracy which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the communist system, together with the growing impact of the human rights movement in the 1990s, placed issues of rights and citizenship on the international agenda at a time when there was a major reassessment of the development policies of the previous decades.

³⁵ For a discussion of the particularly rich experience of Brazil and the role of its women's movements during the transition period see Alvarez 1990.

'Bottom-up development' gained support, implying greater attention to demands from the grass roots, more sensitive policy instruments, and changes in the nature of state-society relations. Slimmed down states were to be partially rehabilitated as actors in the development domain in line with the revised 'post-Washington consensus'; their functions were however to be decentralised and 'deconcentrated' through the continuing privatisation of some of their responsibilities, while civil society was to take a more active role in the delivery of social welfare and management of development. NGOs became important agents in this process; they not only assumed an expanded role in development work and in the delivery of welfare, but many also lobbied governments and worked with grass roots movements to advance citizen rights through legal reform and strategies designed to 'empower' the poor.

Some of these developments represented changes for the better, ones that had eventuated not only from particular conjunctural circumstances but also drew on the lessons of the past. Prominent among these latter were the costly experiments in shock therapy visited on the countries of the South in the 1980s, and then on the former socialist states after 1989. These policies brought inflation under control through recessive stabilisation measures; but they also exposed millions to poverty and unemployment in the absence of effective safety nets. Amidst growing criticism from a wide range of sources, including the various agencies of the UN, 'market fundamentalism' and shock treatment receded as policy priorities and development approaches were revised. The state was partially rehabilitated and good governance reform agendas sought to render institutions more efficient and accountable. Development practice was henceforth to be more consultative, more sensitive to the needs of the poor, the environment, ethnic minorities, women, and others who had been at the sharp end of it³⁶. These shifts of emphasis represented not so much a 'new paradigm' as the fact that development agencies and governments were finally taking on board more than 30 years of criticism of their top down, 'growth first', policies.

³⁶ For a positive account from a Latin American perspective of the shift from a 'monist, reductive and economistic' approach to development to this 'new approach' see the paper by Kliksberg u.d – himself the Coordinator of the Interamerican Institute for Social Development.

For all the changes in emphasis and approach that occurred however, the full potential of these positive lessons was vitiated by the continuing influence of market fundamentalism in some of the most influential arenas of policymaking. The Washington Consensus might have lost some of its earlier self-confidence and remade itself in a new image, but many of its tenets continued to hold sway over the direction of international policy. Through the increasing resort to conditionalities from the 1980s, LDCs were persuaded to deregulate, privatise, and open up, while turning over more and more of their governmental responsibilities in the domains of development and welfare to private and voluntary agencies. Such moves however were not uniformly rewarded with the hoped-for growth and inflows of foreign investment; for most LDCs growth rates remained low, while in many of the poorest states, they fell. The growing 'interdependency' promoted by globalisation continued to be a selective process and major investment flows involved a relatively small number of (usually) historic partners, leaving much of the rest of the world short or even starved of cash³⁷. At the same time, short term 'shareholder capitalism', most notoriously represented by hedge funds, moved in and out of countries in search of quick profits, and was never held to account for the financial crises it could occasion.

Since the 1980s, dubbed the 'lost decade' due to the debt crisis, Latin America has been beset by periodic economic crises and low levels of growth. The percentage of those living in poverty in the ECLAC region declined from 41 to 36 between 1990 and 1997, but this is still above the percentage for 1980 (35%) and the absolute number of the poor remains stable at around 200 million (ECLAC 1999). Women constitute the majority of the indigent and poorest in Latin America and outnumber men among the unemployed and the illiterate, (still significant among indigenous peoples)³⁸; they also occupy the lowest paid and least secure jobs, and suffer from high levels of violence and risk³⁹. An extensive literature has

³⁷ In 1998 10 countries received 78% of FDI (UNDP 1999).

³⁸ Despite a lack of gender sensitive data and some disagreements over the interpretation of empirical material in the analysis of female poverty, there is evidence to support the assertion that the proportion of women in poverty is greater than men, and that female headed households are poorer than male headed households. See ECLAC 2000 and UNIFEM 2000.

³⁹ This is not to deny that men too, are subjected to violence, familial and public; in both cases they are also the main perpetrators.

theorised and documented the gendered cost of macro-economic policies, and has drawn attention to the ways in which women through their role in the reproductive economy, acted as the 'shock absorbers' in the economic crisis (Elson 1991). The effects of the creeping privatisation of welfare on women have been shown to increase their caring responsibilities while the costs of such services have led to many women and girls using them less. Yet for all the talk in regional governmental and UN summits of the need to make progress in promoting gender equity, economic and social policies have remained largely impervious to these criticisms⁴⁰.

Rediscovering society

A growing malaise over the deterioration of the social fabric and rise in crime that accompanied the application of the new economic model, united left and right alike in a common platform to arrest the damage caused by the continuing process of restructuring. Regional development agencies called for social policies that could restore the fabric of society through activating greater participation, more 'community level' networks and ties of social solidarity. These were to serve as a counterweight to the anomie caused by poverty, informalisation and persistent levels of unemployment⁴¹.

This concern for 'the social' and for participatory project management *preceded* the arrival of social capital approaches in Latin America. In the 1980s social analysis and development policies were governed by other theoretical concepts, two of which were particularly important in the region's policy arenas: first was that of civil society and later, citizenship - concepts which were particularly central to debates over the role of social movements and the prospects for democracy in post authoritarian Latin America. The second, perhaps less prominent, was social cohesion and its cognate terms social integration and social

⁴⁰ The situation, according to ECLAC would have been even worse had it not been for the efforts of women's movements in the region which did secure some measures that helped alleviate female poverty (ECLAC 2000).

⁴¹ In Latin America such concerns belatedly revived a lapsed interest in social policy, as I argue in Molyneux 2000b.

inclusion - as applied in particular to the debates over poverty and social marginalisation.

Social capital arguably represents both a weaker conceptual construct and policy instrument than either of these alternative conceptual clusters. Moreover, its appearance in the policy field might be seen as signalling a retreat from more problematic agendas for ruling elites and international development agencies - of citizenship and rights on the one hand, and of provision and policies to ensure greater social inclusion on the other. While citizenship and rights-based agendas raise questions about politics and entitlements, and debates about social integration and exclusion implicitly confront social policy issues⁴², social capital, where its focus is on micro-level phenomena, raises few such challenging questions⁴³. In its most common usages it occupies a terrain upon which politics typically only enters through the back door, while social inequalities are rarely confronted either in theory or in policy. In this it follows in the footsteps of its sociological antecedent 'community' and aligns itself with its contemporary political filiate, communitarianism - both of which can exist in considerable tension with women's rights and entitlements as we shall see.

If social capital's absorption into development agendas cannot be abstracted from these international policy shifts, I would argue further, that in Latin America it acquires a particular salience as a *post transition* concept, appearing as ideas of radical democracy, along with social movement activism, and citizenship struggles lost their momentum in the neo-liberal 1990s. These earlier struggles were often behind some of the most innovative and successful development initiatives in Latin America. Led by parties, trade unions, neighbourhood organisations and women's movements among others, these forces challenged military dictatorships and engaged in struggles for democracy in political and social life. Detached from these political origins the projects

⁴² In considering the institutional basis of exclusion analysts tackle questions of education and public health and labour market regulation (see Bryan Roberts 2001). 'The issue has thus become that of the institutional arrangements of the modern stage that keep substantial numbers of the population dependent and without adequate access to the opportunities of their society'. P.6.

⁴³ The work of Woolcott and Portes, in addressing macro level issues of social integration are suggestive of a more promising strand within the social capital approach.

that they founded are now often claimed simply as evidence of the benign workings of social capital. Yet it was political agency and the values that lay behind the creation of some of these projects that are the critical variables in comprehending the reasons for their success.

From social movements to social capital

In the conditions of structural reform that accompanied the region's redemocratisation process, ideas of participation and 'bottom up' development initially promoted by NGOs, social movements and civic associations, were steadily appropriated by international agencies and governments and re-fashioned as policy tools. Increasingly endorsed by governments and by the World Bank, they were now seen as a way of tackling a range of social and political problems by establishing a more widely shared sense of social responsibility and a firmer basis for political legitimacy at a time when the role of the state was being redefined and its welfare commitments reduced. The World Bank expressed this aspect of the New development agenda succinctly in its 1997 Report where it urged development practitioners to make 'greater efforts to take the burden off the state by involving citizens and communities in the delivery of core collective goods' (World Bank Report 1997).

Social capital is a concept that converges with the premises of the new development agenda in at least five respects. First, it conforms to the emphasis on decentralisation and subsidiarity as social capital is generally assumed to be a property of localities and communities; second, the new agenda prioritises working with independent associations and civil society organisations - now recast as social capital and participation. Third, the idea that communities are more efficient than states in the achievement of welfare or development goals is central to the current policy agenda. Fourth the current emphasis placed on the virtues of self-help and voluntary work as a way to develop greater self-reliance and autonomy from the state has highlighted the importance of social capital and participation. And last but not least social capital is assumed to reduce the costs of development and enhance efficiency through the mobilisation of resources that are freely given and considered to be sustainable because they are in the

collective interest⁴⁴. As the president of the World Bank expressed it 'Participation matters - not only as a means of improving development effectiveness, as we know from our recent studies - but as the key to long-term sustainability and leverage.' (Francis 2001: 72)

Social capital is seen as operating as a collective good, with beneficial outcomes, as a policy resource that must be operationalised and if possible strengthened by its association with development projects and goals. It is, in World Bank definitions, the 'glue' that 'holds societies together'⁴⁵. However, in the hands of practitioners, whether these be development agencies, governments or NGOs, the injunction to work with an appreciation of the benefits of social capital eventuates in widely different interpretations. What social capital means to development agents, and how they think it should be strengthened, differs according to the political and institutional arrangements that prevail and the cultural context in which policies are applied. This is because the practical policy implications of social capital are by no means clear. We read of the need to strengthen it 'where it exists', to build on community associations, to restore indigenous institutions, and to develop participatory mechanisms. But who decides what particular forms of social capital need strengthening, which associations to support, which norms and principles of co-operation are to be upheld, and through the intervention of which external agencies?

These are very *political* questions in Latin America as they are elsewhere. Social capital has been generated by social movements (bottom up, horizontal social capital) but hierarchical forms also exist, some more benign than others. Civil society is, in general, far from autonomous, permeated as it is by state and party patronage. While there is a positive role for states to play in development processes, and examples of dynamic synergy (Evans 1996) between state and civil society abound, these are contingent outcomes. In Latin America governments regularly pour resources into their own clientelistic networks for the purposes of securing votes: the case of the participatory Solidarity programme

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Bryan Roberts (2001) for the formulation of the first and fifth of these points.

⁴⁵ World Bank website, also cited in Edwards u.d. website posting.

PRONASOL in Mexico under the Salinas administration (1988-1994) is a much cited example of this (Fox 1997, Dominguez 1998). The ignominious flight to Japan of former President Fujimori of Peru has been followed by disclosures that revealed layers of corruption and clientelism, a veritable 'colonisation' of civil society by the state. In Argentina government supported poverty relief programmes involving tens of thousands of volunteers have been used by successive governments as ways to garner electoral support (Auyero, 2001, Feijóo 2001). NGOs too, normally seen as having more freedom to determine who they work with, (ie. to determine which social capital they wish to support, create or utilise) are coming under increasing control by governments who wish to restrict and channel their activities especially where these are seen to challenge government priorities as in the case of human rights and some women's projects⁴⁶. What agencies build or sustain social capital and with what purpose is therefore a central not a secondary matter.

Gender and Social Capital

These broader issues of international policy, regional context and politics, need to be borne in mind when thinking about gender issues in relation to social capital. If we turn to the literature on social capital and consider the practices associated with it in the domain of policy, we see that gender is both present and absent in troubling ways. On the one hand much of the literature all but ignores gender relations, and focuses in the main on men's networks. Not one of the postings on the World Bank website on social capital (at the time of writing) directly addressed let alone critically engaged gender issues. On the other hand, where gender relations are acknowledged, they are often encoded in normative assumptions about women which misrepresent their lived relations and lead to policies of questionable merit.

This is perhaps surprising in view of the fact that 'gender' has been recognised within development policy since at least the 1970s

⁴⁶ The Alemán government of Nicaragua is a case in point. It has sought to restrict funds that support some feminist NGOs at the same time as it has narrowed the range of NGOs it is prepared to work with. The administration has pursued a policy of open confrontation with feminist agendas in the international arena as well, seeking to challenge many of the formulations agreed upon at Beijing and encoded in the Platform for Action.

and has been the subject of extensive feminist advocacy and debate. Most development agencies have had to show that they take what they call 'gender issues' seriously, and standard project proposals and evaluations have for some time included requirements to consider the gender dimension and impact. Such commitments however, may give a false impression and exaggerate the degree to which gender *is* taken seriously: the World Bank for example has a gender policy unit responsible for mainstreaming gender issues and has committed resources to developing 'woman friendly' policies. But a recent evaluation of 100 World Bank projects shows the results to be disappointing in this regard and concludes that gender issues were in fact 'widely neglected' in their design and implementation (Frances 2001:86). Likewise, Latin American studies of NGOs in a variety of countries have shown that it was rare to find gender inputs into the administration of Social Funds (Gideon 1998). There is no reason to suppose that the same gap between stated intentions and project implementation will not occur in the case of social capital enhancing projects.

A gender-aware approach to social capital has to begin not just by recognising but also by problematising the fact that women are very often central to the forms of social capital that development agencies and governments are keen to mobilise in their poverty relief and community development programmes. The evidence shows across a range of countries that women among low-income groups are frequently those with the strongest community and kin ties; many such women do network, they do engage in reciprocal supportive relations, they are often those who support church activities and participate in local forms of associational life. They are often at the heart of voluntary self help schemes whether in health, education or neighbourhood food and housing programmes. The government-supported poverty assistance programme Plan Vida (Life Plan) association in the Province of Buenos Aires involved a million beneficiaries administered by 22,500 unpaid residents, mostly women, in the target zone. In such cases, women undoubtedly help to sustain the social fabric. Yet it is not always so: and comparatively little attention is paid to situations where such ties are weak - a point returned to later. Moreover where there is a recognition of women's contribution to

the social fabric, it has helped to create a set of expectations about their role in development projects that have had some perverse effects.

In the first place there is the familiar assumption that women are *naturally* predisposed to serve their families or communities either because they are less motivated by a self serving individualism, or more materially, because of their social 'embeddedness' in family and neighbourhood ties due to their responsibility for the domain of social reproduction. The latter view carries some force in Latin America where neighbourhood mobilisation around basic needs provision frequently involves women. Gendered divisions of labour are strongly reinforced by cultural norms which under the influence of Catholicism, signify motherhood as a powerful referent in the construction of identity. The naturalisation of women's supposed 'disposition' for social capital maintenance thus receives a certain ideological sanction, but one which does not question the terms on which, or the power relations involved, in situating women in this way. This essentialising of sex attributes can all too easily make the responsibility for community projects, family health, or environmental protection (women are 'closer to nature') come to be seen as the preserve of women.

A consequence of naturalising the work that women do in these domains is that they are often targeted for voluntary i.e. unpaid work. Self-help projects and voluntary sector work imply a considerable, often unacknowledged dependency upon women's unpaid or poorly paid labour. Such work, seen as a natural extension of their responsibilities for the family/community is consequently taken for granted and is assumed to be cost-free to the women and to the project. Indeed as Gideon notes, 'cost benefit analysis of projects fails to take into account the opportunity costs of women's time'. (Gideon 1998:308) Evidence from studies of NGO programmes in Latin America illustrate this point. One UNICEF project in Guatemala mobilised women as volunteers in an urban development project where they were responsible for a range of tasks such as home visits and maintaining health records, involving an average of eight hours a week⁴⁷. No support was given in the

⁴⁷ Espinosa and Lopez Rivera 1991 cited in Gideon 1998.

form of childcare and the volunteers soon found it necessary to withdraw from the scheme. This example is unfortunately typical of many, and the underlying assumptions have been widely criticised by feminist theorists and practitioners. Projects which assume that women are free and available for unpaid work, and are designed to increase women's labour productivity or intensify their caring responsibilities, have been shown to fail time and again because they overload exhausted women without offering them adequate remuneration, any support in the form of childcare, or any training in skills that many need to obtain a paid job - still the most effective way of tackling poverty among women.⁴⁸ Maintaining social capital then, can come at a high, if unacknowledged, cost to women.

A second perverse effect of these assumptions concerns the way in which social capital can be treated as the panacea for poverty, as if this alone can substitute for resources and policies. This has clear gender implications. It has been argued by feminist analysts that the effects of the poverty into which millions fell in the 1980s would have been far more devastating had it not been for the efforts of women to secure survival strategies. Recast as evidence of the importance of social capital, we hear much about how poverty is alleviated by community and kin co-operation among the poor. No-one disputes that this can be and often is the case: indeed studies carried out across Latin America show how essential these social resources were to the survival of the poor, and how they were mobilised mainly by women⁴⁹ - sometimes on a massive scale in a collective endeavour. In Peru in the conditions of economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, tens of thousands of neighbourhood associations organised around basic survival strategies such as the glass of milk campaign and the popular canteens. Much of the work in these projects was carried out by women, and in the absence of other alternatives, it represented a collectivised responsibility for survival. These examples can be seen as evidence of the importance of social capital in poverty relief; but to see it in these terms alone avoids confronting the fact

⁴⁸ Kandiyoti (1988) draws attention to the reliance of participatory strategies for health delivery on mothers to administer and even finance initiatives that are directed at improving child health – oral rehydration, immunisation, among them. The onus is on women to extend their traditional responsibilities in the family to include provision of basic healthcare.

⁴⁹ Gonzales de la Rocha 1994, Chant 1991, 1997.

that this was a form of co-operation that developed in response to what might otherwise be seen as a crisis in social reproduction (Pearson 1997). If we omit the background indicators on poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and child mortality, we get a too rosy picture of associational life in which social capital - in this case the unpaid labour of women - is mobilised as the safety net for irresponsible macro-economic policies and poor governance.

Social capital as Putnam himself has emphasised, thrives best where material conditions permit the development of a rich associational life; trust thrives where civic norms prevail. Research in the United States has confirmed a tradition of sociological theory from Comte onwards that the decline in 'social capital' or social solidarity clearly correlates with the worsening position of the disadvantaged⁵⁰. What then of the conditions that prevail in poorer developing countries? Are they necessarily any different? Moser (1996) has shown in a study of four low income communities, that, as in the Peruvian example, poverty can generate social capital where kin ties are strengthened in times of shared adversity; but poverty also erodes the fabric of social life. As assets and employment possibilities decline, the poor cease to engage in exchange relations and avoid dependencies such as borrowing fearing they cannot repay (Moser 1998). In such circumstances, kin relations become strained as demands for support from vulnerable relatives grow. Broader community forms of solidarity and reciprocity weaken as households turn inwards and exhibit the traits associated with 'asocial familism'. Crime and gang warfare in poor neighbourhoods exacerbate these trends, adding fear and deepening mistrust of others⁵¹. The points that can be resumed here then are: first, the building, sustaining and undermining of social capital is critically dependent upon wider policies that help to determine the resources available to people; second, social capital is highly variable in its forms of existence, in its presence or absence, strength and weakness. Third, in conditions of poverty 'coping strategies' might be a

⁵⁰ Wuthnow n.d. is a recent empirical study of GSS data (cited in Adler n.d).

⁵¹ See the research of Dennis Rodgers on criminal gangs in Nicaragua: one of his informants said 'nobody does anything for anybody any more, nobody cares if their neighbour is robbed, nobody does anything for the common good...you don't know whether somebody will return you your favours, or whether he won't steal your belongings when your back is turned. It's the law of the jungle here; we are eating one another,...' (Rodgers:2000:4)

preferable, and less value-laden description than social capital to denote the forms of co-operation that arise. Here we might want to distinguish between 'forced' co-operation and 'normal' or elective forms of solidarity; the former is arguably not social capital if it is not the outcome of a cumulative, sustainable and long term process⁵². In sum, social capital approaches might have the potential to render visible the importance of the reproductive or survival economy, – but this activity should not be taken for granted and instrumentalised in ways that might be detrimental to the poor. Policies work best when they strengthen the capabilities of agents to enter into voluntary and mutually beneficial association, sustainable over time, rather than simply being short term and parasitic on the ties of solidarity that may exist.

If hidden assumptions in social capital approaches are one problem, another is the lack of attention paid to gender inequalities in the new policy agendas. While increasingly recognised in the scholarly debate, equity issues are often marginalised in social capital development literature. The social relations in and through which social capital is reproduced are rarely analysed or taken into proper account. If social capital is diversely present in social formations, it accrues to, or is accessed by certain groups and not by others just as its benefits are also unevenly distributed. Portes has written extensively of the way that immigrant communities are differently endowed with social capital, but also that those with dense networks tend to operate in self serving and hence exclusionary ways (. If networks, by virtue of their modes of operation function to exclude as much as to include, - this is strikingly evident in the way that inclusion and exclusion are almost always gendered processes. It follows that there are considerable differences between men's and women's networks; as far as gender is concerned, since power relations within societies are reflected in and reproduced by social networks, women can find themselves disadvantaged in at least two ways: first they do not usually belong to the kinds of networks that bring economic advantage. In the case of business or political favours,

⁵² I borrow the distinction between forced and normal forms of co-operation from Durkheim's characterisation of abnormal and normal forms of the division of labour.

valuable contacts typically operate through male in-groups⁵³, in masculine social spaces which exclude women, and depend upon time and resources whose accessibility is also gender-related. Second, female networks generally command fewer economic resources and rely more frequently on time and non-monetised labour exchanges that can be accommodated within the domestic division of labour. Development policies designed to draw upon and to maximise the utility of social capital often fail to engage these issues and in so doing can unintentionally exacerbate existing social inequalities in their projects by favouring men's networks financially and organisationally, and by taking women's for granted. This usually means that women are seen as not requiring the same resources or support.

Micro-credit programmes are however an instance where women's networks are being fostered through economic agency. A central part of neo-liberal poverty alleviation strategies, they have absorbed substantial numbers of women into these projects. This intake is deliberate and is driven by four arguments; that women are heavily represented among the poorest and need assistance with income generating projects; that they therefore have greater difficulty in accessing credit; they have (or can create and sustain) good networks and forms of co-operation which can ensure project efficiency; and that they have higher rates of loan repayment than men. Despite some successes, many micro credit projects for women fail. Among the reasons is the failure to take account of the gender relations that limit women's access to the funds they generate: in other words, men appropriate and control them (Goetz 1996). The failure to tackle gender relations also means that in many cases women find themselves unable to access the resources they need to ensure that their enterprises succeed - one example is their exclusion from male controlled markets, - another is the lack of help with childcare (Mayoux 2001). More generally, if women are a significant proportion of the poorest, microcredit projects may be failing to reach them. A review of one of the most successful schemes in Bolivia concluded that while they could deliver results for those close to the poverty line, they were 'ineffective in comparison with labour market and

⁵³ Networks clearly also display ethnic as well as gender bias in such areas as access to credit and trade reflecting social asymmetries of status and power .

infrastructural measures in reducing extreme poverty' (Moseley 2001:101). Moreover, as far as social capital is concerned, it has been observed that many micro credit projects, far from creating and sustaining social capital may instead serve to undermine social solidarity in failing to foster co-operative relations among members and creating a socially corrosive competitive individualism. When this is combined with credit programmes that do not reach the very poor, and focus on including the better endowed in their schemes, the social capital that is drawn upon and created is not only individualised but may serve to deepen existing inequalities while not offering adequate solutions to the poorest. This is not to deny that micro-credit programmes can be an effective poverty relief strategy but rather to point out that their weaknesses can be highlighted and addressed through closer attention to gender relations.

Conservative bias?

A third problem from a gender equity perspective arises from the conservative bias associated with most social capital approaches. Practitioners are routinely urged to build on existing social capital and to revive past forms. Where this is interpreted as supporting 'traditional' networks and forms of administration and where project design is not guided by a commitment to prioritise equity concerns in policies, the result can be to deepen existing social divisions without necessarily increasing project efficiency⁵⁴. From a gender equity perspective existing elites and organisations might well be identified as an obstacle to women's participation and inhibit the creation of more efficient practices and more solidaristic community relations.

The conservative bias in the policy prescriptions designed in regard to social capital is most evident where they resonate with communitarian agendas. When applied to development projects,

⁵⁴ There are particular problems associated with international agencies seeking to strengthen the social capital and institutional capacity of indigenous communities. This can result in indigenous communities becoming client groups of international agencies and having to invent or 'revitalise' traditional organisations. Where these function in ways which consolidate the power of sometimes quite undemocratic and inefficient elites which exclude religious minorities and women from participation while benefiting from the resources that are handed out to them as 'representatives' of their communities such policies have come in for considerable criticism.

some of the same weaknesses that have been identified in communitarianism reappear. Social capital approaches have an implicit tendency to idealise communities which are treated as existing without structured power relations and conflict. The 'community' comes to acquire moral authority and through participatory mechanisms (which may be more or less meaningful) it comes to be seen as the most efficient instrument for planning and implementing policies (Francis :79). However, there is considerable scepticism in the critical development literature about these assumptions. Among the many problems noted is the partial way in which representation and participation work, resulting in silencing the voices of those without power and effectively undermining the claims that a legitimate consensus has indeed been achieved. More broadly, the underlying assumption that communities are necessarily more effective and efficient than well governed states is one that is far from supported by the evidence⁵⁵. An noted, successful participatory projects in Latin America have frequently depended upon a creative synergy between state and civil society (Evans 1996, Tendler 1997).

The communitarian sympathies that underpin many social capital approaches are most evident in the treatment of the family. Material on the World Bank social capital website endorses the family as a prime locus of social capital, to be worked with and strengthened ⁵⁶On the face of it few would disagree, but much depends on how this is interpreted and what is meant by 'the family'. In much of this literature the family is treated normatively as a unit in which no account is taken of the gendered divisions of labour and power within it. Seeing 'the family' as enhancing the life chances of children or maximising the informal incomes of the poor is hardly helpful in identifying needs and resources if it assumes no gender differences or inequalities in the family unit. Feijóo, writing about the social capital 'boom' in Latin America notes that current usages seem to have forgotten earlier work on

⁵⁵ The evidence from Latin America allows us to question Fukuyama's claim that the level of state intervention is inversely proportional to the stock of social capital in society. Tendler's work on Ceará in Brazil (Tendler 1997) shows that decentralised states and civic associations can co-operate effectively on social programmes under certain conditions.

⁵⁶ This point was made by Mayoux in an earlier article (Mayoux 2001) and can be confirmed as still being valid at the time of writing November 01.

intra-household relations⁵⁷, and calls for greater appreciation of the historical and regional diversity of family forms.

It virtually goes without saying that in Latin America the family/household is a unit for the most part subjected to often exaggerated forms of male privilege; moreover 'the' family is in fact associated with multiple forms of kin and non-kin inter-dependency, and the nuclear family form accounts for at most 50% of households in the region. With growing numbers of female headed and extended households, up to 40% of married women (or more) in work in most countries, (more often than not in the informal sector or in poorly rewarded and insecure jobs), one wonders how 'supporting the family' will be translated into policy, and how it would square with the efforts of women's organisations whose work departs from rather different assumptions.

Communitarians are united in lamenting the corrosive effects on social capital of women's entry into paid work. Putnam sees the decline of family and kinship as a major factor in eroding social capital and cites 'market based childcare' as partly to blame, - views echoed by Fukuyama in his recent work The Great Disruption. This returns us to the point made earlier with regard to the politics of policy implementation and alerts us to the different ways in which gender issues can be treated in social capital approaches. The conservative Church in Latin America joins in the communitarian denunciation of women's entry into wage labour holding it responsible for a range of social ills. Women's responsibilities to the family and community are held up against the 'selfish individualism' that drives them to seek self fulfilment in work⁵⁸. At the same time the women's movement and feminist NGOs have been building networks of trust and solidarity amongst women through employment, training and health programmes. It is usually only with great difficulty that such groups have been able to gain support for projects that target female headed households amongst the poorest, in contexts where

⁵⁷ She cites inter alia the 'gender blind' overview policy paper prepared for the CEPAL conference by Durston 2001.

⁵⁸ These tensions are explored more fully in 'Gender and Citizenship in Latin America' in Molyneux 2000.

they are denounced as 'encouraging the break-up of the family'⁵⁹. In a region with some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world, it is hardly surprising that women's movements have been active in supporting victims of such abuse and in training female heads of households for employment⁶⁰. This conflict over the politics and forms of social capital that are seen as desirable expresses what may be a more fundamental tension between social capital approaches on the one hand and those that foreground rights on the other. Many feminist NGOs and CSOs have been engaged in rights advocacy work using the language of citizenship and developing programmes which empower women and allow them to develop some autonomy. It is not difficult to see how such strategies challenge the more conservative interpretations of social capital approaches. The 'detraditionalising' of the family, and the reconfiguring of a new sexual contract premised on female autonomy (Giddens 1990), requires more creative responses from policymakers than the *simpliste* call to 'support the family'.

Conclusions

Social capital has its enthusiasts, tacticians and its sceptics (Edwards u.d.). It has enjoyed considerable scholarly attention of late and seen some refinement in its conceptual apparatus. However, differences in theoretical and policy approaches to building social capital abound, not surprisingly given the lack of consensus on its definition. The operational value of the concept in the policy arena is as varied and contested as the assumptions on which it is based.

Three main points have been made about social capital and its absorption into current policy agendas in Latin America. First this is not an innocent appropriation and in forming part of a broader policy agenda we should be attentive to how it can support 'sticking plaster' approaches to development where it can serve to

⁵⁹ Author's interviews with NGOs in Nicaragua and Chile, and with NGO representatives at the UN Latin American regional summit on women, 2000.

⁶⁰ Research has shown that female headed households are better at redistributing household resources than male headed households and that they are also more networked and socially responsible. Children are not necessarily worse off in female headed households and may even enjoy better conditions and care.

conceal structural issues, notably inequities in the distribution of power and assets, and the human and gendered costs of macro economic policies. Social capital in the form of networks and associational activity can be an important resource in tackling poverty and social disintegration and in assisting in the effective delivery of social welfare. But it is no substitute for policies designed to achieve a more socially integrated society through redistributive measures and sound economic policies.

Second, in the development of projects and policies designed to enhance social capital, a critical gender perspective is essential if social divisions and existing power relations are not to be strengthened. Where policies recognise femininity as a sign of social capital, we need to ask not just what resources of social capital women command, but to paraphrase Martha Nussbaum - what do these resources allow women to do and to be (Nussbaum 2001)? Whether poor women can deploy 'their' social capital to enhance their leverage over resources and policy depends crucially on whether they can develop their capabilities, political as much as economic. Women's and feminist movements have been aiming to do just that through training programmes, through 'empowerment' strategies and by helping to enhance women's claims on citizenship. Social capital approaches need to consider the diverse ways in which feminist networks and associations throughout Latin America have sought to build new forms of social capital, but in ways which are not at variance with, but are in sympathy with regional efforts to advance women's human rights.

Third, social capital begs a number of questions as to the purposes it is designed to serve, who benefits and for what reason. If one of the attractions of social capital to development practitioners is precisely its conceptual imprecision, its applications too often proceed in an apparent innocence of the politics and social relations of the social forces it works with. Like so many of these terms, social capital will therefore be used and abused within the development field. From a gender perspective this ambivalent potential is all too evident. Negatively, it can be grist to the mill of the religious and communitarian right who argue that women's place is in a strengthened patriarchal family and that women's

employment is the cause of social ills. Women's unpaid labour will be instrumentalised while their needs remain unmet. Positively in the hands of more imaginative reformers it could converge with existing agendas to build up citizens and rights associations and support co-operative and democratic forms of associational activity in ways that strengthen development initiatives and help confront the formidable negativity of what Portes has called the 'downside of social capital' - whether these be in the form of criminal gangs, corrupt public administrations, exclusionary elites or authoritarian communities. These points suggest that social capital only acquires meaning within a broader analysis of the socio-economic and political relations in which it operates. In development policy, instead of idealising social capital, taking it for granted, or ignoring its diverse forms and sites, a good place to start in producing a more finely grained approach and more effective policies, would be to take gender relations seriously.

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SOCIAL CAPITAL, ETHNICITY AND HEALTH: FACTORS SHAPING AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORKS

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Overview

This Working Paper examines the impact of ethnic identity on the likelihood of people's participation in local community networks, in the context of recent policy emphasis on the participation of marginalised communities in such networks as a means of reducing health inequalities. Conceptually, the paper is located against the background of debates about possible links between health and social capital - defined in terms of grassroots participation in local community networks - and an interest in the way in which social exclusion impacts on social capital. The paper draws on summaries of lengthy semi-structured, open-ended interviews with twenty-five African-Caribbean residents of a deprived multi-ethnic area of a south England town. While African-Caribbean identity played a central role in people's participation in inter-personal networks, this inter-personal solidarity did not serve to unite people at the local community level beyond particular face-to-face networks. Levels of participation in voluntary organisations and community activist networks were low. Informants regarded this lack of African-Caribbean unity within the local community as a problem, saying that it placed African-Caribbean people at a distinct disadvantage - furthering their social exclusion through limiting their access to various local community resources.

We examine the way in which the construction of ethnic identities - within a context of institutionalised racism at both the material and symbolic levels - makes it unlikely that people will view local community organisations or networks as representative of their interests or needs, or be motivated to participate in them. Our preliminary findings highlight the limitations of policies which simply call for increased community participation by socially

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excluded groups, in the absence of specific measures to address the obstacles that stand in the way of such participation.

Introduction

The context of this presentation is the current emphasis on the importance of 'partnerships between local communities and the government' - in current policy documents about health inequalities in Britain (Dept of Health 1999a; 1999b; Social Exclusion Unit 2000a; 2000b). In this context, social capital is being operationalised as a heuristic device in order to understand better those factors that might promote or hinder such partnerships between government and local black and minority ethnic groupings (BMEGs) in deprived neighbourhoods.

According to the social capital approach, people are more likely to be healthy if they participate in community networks -- ranging from informal networks of friends, family and neighbours; more formal voluntary associations relating to leisure and hobbies (such as youth clubs or Bingo groups) issues.⁶²

Against this background the authors engaged in an extremely detailed micro-qualitative study of social capital in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, drawing on the two most deprived wards of a town in South East England. For brevity of this Working Paper, only a summary of these issues are provided here. However, one can view a more in-depth and extended analysis of the African-Caribbean research cohort from our town of interest in the researchers published work elsewhere (Campbell & Mclean, forthcoming)

⁶² Of course, this approach is fiercely debated however - for positions strongly in favour see Kawachi *et al.*, 1997; Kawachi and Kennedy, 1999; for weaker correlations see Veenstra and Lomas, 1999; and for refutation of health and social capital approach altogether see Hawe and Shiell, 2000.

Participation in social networks

The following is an overview of African-Caribbean people's engagement in social networks in five spheres ranging from the personal realm of friends and family, up to that of formal community activism and mobilisation, which is then itself divided into three sub-themes.

1. Family and Friends

People's main support networks were almost always composed of African-Caribbean people. Firstly, people tended to rely overwhelmingly on other family members for all forms of social support. In cases where family relationships had broken down, people were often completely at sea - with no perceived alternative sources of support, and respondents not always sure how to access support from social services. Given the geographical dispersion of African-Caribbean people in our town of interest these support networks often tended not to be located in the immediate neighbourhood: people's primary networks, identities and loyalties were certainly not located within their local neighbourhoods in any way.

2. The local community: neighbours

In our community of interest, numbers of African-Caribbean people were low (c.5%). People tended to have close links with African-Caribbean neighbours when they had them but otherwise, while people reported civil relationships with neighbours, these were limited to polite greetings in the street or over the fence. Otherwise people placed much emphasis on 'keeping a distance', 'not troubling one another' with little apparent culture of reciprocity evident amongst neighbours.

3. Work and school

While African-Caribbean identity was a positive and potent source of pride and personal empowerment in people's personal and social lives, it had often served as a source of social exclusion in

other spheres of life, in a way that was unlikely to encourage people to view themselves as part of close local networks.

The research generated literally hundreds of minor anecdotes to illustrate this point. People spoke of numerous incidents where they had felt that their ethnicity set them apart at school. One woman spoke of the isolation she had felt at school - growing up with strict African-Caribbean parents with a different religious culture (e.g. no trousers, no ears pierced, plaited hairstyle with clips and bows) - and how this had made her feel like an outsider growing up in a predominantly White English community. Another spoke of his relief when another little African-Caribbean boy arrived in his class, kicking and screaming about wanting to go home - and how their close friendship had been based on their sense of mutual exclusion.

Several informants spoke of how their African-Caribbean identity had shaped the sense of exclusion they felt in the educational sphere and in the labour market, where African-Caribbean people were generally in the minority. A young man spoke of the racism he had experienced on his YTS training course, little knowing that worse was to come when he entered the workplace.

While people acknowledged the success of African-Caribbean people in areas such as sport and culture, they felt the lack of role models in politics and business, one female manager noting how she was the only one African-Caribbean out of 120 managerial peers. In short, people's experiences both at school and in the workplace, pointed to numerous direct and indirect ways in which people were constantly made to feel like outsiders in their daily lives. *However as we shall argue below, a range of forces combined to make it unlikely that this sense of exclusion would lead to the basis of political mobilisation around ethnically defined interests.*

4. Local voluntary organisations

African-Caribbean identity played a central role in people's accounts of their personal leisure time and social life -- but this social life was not located in the local community in any sense. People's social lives were conducted with small groups of friends,

often at people's houses or in pubs or clubs. People tended not to draw on local organisations or leisure facilities in their social lives.

Respondents expressed various views on the possibilities and/or limitations of faith groups playing an important part of any local community-building exercises, speaking of the strong role the church had played in creating a sense of community amongst older people when they first arrived in England. However, it was widely believed that the church held lesser relevance for many younger African-Caribbean people in terms of community-building and cohesion. While a number of places of worship were evident in our town of interest, people felt there was little co-operation across the vastly differing array of churches to which black people were affiliated - wasting an opportunity for a key umbrella that might have united African-Caribbean people.

5. The local community: political mobilisation

While African-Caribbean identity played a key role in people's private personal and social lives, it was not seen as a key political resource by most people. This was most strongly articulated through people making comparisons between the African-Caribbean and the Asian community in England.

5.1 Comparison with other ethnic groups

There were two main sources of comparison with the Asian community. Firstly people referred to their relative agency and confidence in using their ethnicity as a political resource. Secondly people referred to the relative integration of African-Caribbean people into the mainstream British community which meant that people did not experience community life in the ethnically and culturally demarcated way of their Asian counterparts.

The archetypes and stereotypes erected by African-Caribbean community about the South Asian community were that of: numerical strength; a strong sense of common identity, culture and religion and, concomitantly, a very strong sense of common interests; very skilled at mobilising resources to protect Asian interests; extremely supportive of one another; and with visible

achievements (such as local mosques and South Asian-specific services etc.) to bind the community further. A common perception from all participants was that the PK community had been particularly successful in acquiring their local Community Centre and several mosques. This was contrasted against the lack of a comparable community centre for the African-Caribbean population within our town of interest.

In contrast, the African-Caribbean community itself was stereotyped as: numerically dispersed; and outnumbered by Asian people in relation to ethnic minority issues; lacking confidence with elder generations sometimes displaying a 'Windrush' mentality (of first generation African-Caribbean immigrants); more individualistic and cliquey than the more inclusive Asian communities; generally not supportive of black issues; too integrated into mainstream culture with not enough distinctiveness with regard to culture, food, clothing, religion; with few role models, or concrete monuments to black achievements (equivalent of mosques), and no similar sense of history.

Powerful and strong, yeah. That's how they get their place down the road in Bury Park because they went and they volunteer to do things and they put in their petitions and they said they wanted places for their people to come and sit down and chat and they get it. I think - is it Stevenage? Hitchin. They done the same thing and they get it in Hitchin. It was on the news there. In Hitchin, they went and they protested that the Asian people don't have anywhere to go in the days, and they put in their petition, and they get a nice place too' (ACF7-68⁶³).

One informant who was politically active at the local level expressed frustration at the difficulty of mobilising African-Caribbean people around local issues.

'If the African-Caribbean community want a place for themselves, they should come and put in their word and exactly tell the council what they really want, and make sure they get what they really want, but they don't. Their excuse is that the meetings are too late at night, it's too this - but still, if it was the Asian people, they will come and put in their support. So you see why black people cannot bring anything in [name of town]. If it was Asian and they wanted a

⁶³ Interview convention - African Caribbean (AC), Male/Female (M/F), interview no.-interviewee age (e.g 1-65).

community centre, you would see those people coming in droves to put in their word, in all different languages and towns, to get what they want. They had a meeting at the town hall a couple of months ago about [a proposed African-Caribbean community centre] that they want to get - but not a soul went down there. I was shocked. Not a soul that would go to that centre was there that night.' (ACF7-68)

Several people referred to the relative integration of the African-Caribbean community into the mainstream culture, arguing that this was one of the reasons why it was so difficult to bring African-Caribbean people together around common issues.

'We are too ready to integrate...it would seem as though we're ready to take on board the influences of another culture My mum and dad's education was sent over from Britain. The books they read were British. We speak English. What is there? What do we really have? We have maybe a national food, a few dishes. Maybe we have certain music that people will always associate with the West Indies, or maybe specifically Jamaica, but we don't have a method of dress that is particularly Jamaican, do we? We eat McDonalds, we eat pasta, we eat salt fish. But we watch East Enders, we don't have our own channel. We don't have anything more specific, they are the things that keep people tight. We don't have a religion that spans across the whole black community. So maybe that's why we don't have such a strong community.' (ACF4-32).

5.2 Attitudes to local politics

A key dimension of social capital as defined by Putnam is trust in the ability of local government to represent the interests of ordinary people. This was certainly not the case in our study.

Little faith in the political process

In keeping with research across the national UK population, there seemed to be little faith in political processes or in politicians themselves. There was a distinct distrust of politicians in a local and national context, although specific reasons for distrust were not greatly evidenced.

Interestingly, local community newspapers were not highly valued, nor referred to on a frequent basis. However, people tended to be satisfied or neutral about local services (except for the

police, but this dissatisfaction was infrequently a basis for collective action).

Apathy to local involvement

Another common theme from participants revolved around the difficulty of getting black people involved in community groupings, even when around black issues in the first instance. There was a sense that African-Caribbean people in the area were aware of problems that they may feel related to their ethnicity but would not necessarily act on these:

-yea we sit down and cuss in our houses, don't we? we sit down and moan and moan, but we don't actually get up and say 'yeah' (CM11)

-if we get more people to sit down and complain about things like the Asians have done with the West Indian community, I don't think they try hard enough you know. or it wants more people to protest and complain about it, we take it too easy or something I don't know why we don't complain - maybe we just don't care (CM4)

Decline of black consciousness

Informants in their late twenties spoke of how their his teenage years had been enriched by collective memories of the black power struggle culture and music of the 1970s and early 1980s. They felt this influence had become diluted as time passed and as black people became more integrated into the mainstream culture, with Black Consciousness as a dwindling and under-utilised resource.

Rasta was really strong in that time there still. So like, you know, man, the whole black strength thing was there still, and like they (younger black men) was just learning from like being around them bigger men There's no way its the same now, you know what I mean. Them time, man, they were more and more militant in them times. The youth now, they're a bit soft [later]. Yeah, yeah, it's more integrated still. But, you know what I mean, but saying that, it's much more integrated. But then it looks like we're losing a bit of our strength at the same time. So I don't really know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, cause that means, if integration means that we're going to get weaker and weaker [...] shit, that ain't really no good still, man. (ACF4-32)

5.3 Divisions within the black community make it hard to mobilise people

While reference to religious divisions within the African-Caribbean community have already been highlighted, people also referred to a range of other differences: different island identities amongst African-Caribbean people in England; different interests, people gather in different venues; class divisions in black community: A couple of informants spoke of how middle class black people often tended to move away from the neighbourhood, to more affluent (usually white dominated) neighbourhoods, and to lose their links with their neighbourhood of origin. Others referred to the way in which upwardly mobile African-Caribbean people encouraged their children to form friendships with white kids as a way of making social contacts which might benefit them in later life. Such parents discouraged their children from attending black dominated youth clubs for example.

One informant spoke of how black people often appeared to lose their critical edge once they joined the middle classes. Only very extreme cases (e.g. the Lawrence murder) seemed to mobilise them into loudly articulating a black identity.

We did split up (African-Caribbean people) ----- we started off together but we ain't together no more.When you see Stephen Lawrence getting killed by men and the police not doing nothing, it's times like this where those people who are working and they're living in a paradise because they haven't got They're working and they've achieved middle-class status and they ain't got no troubles on earth, it's time that they realised that, yeah, there are black people getting killed just like them. You know, which makes them realise the fact that, yeah, I can play a part in this black struggle too. Cause there's plenty of black people here. The elder people, they haven't committed a crime, middle class, got a lot of clout and that, but they don't do nothing for their own. But hopefully these incidents come up, with the Stephen Lawrence's, more and more people will realise that there's a struggle out there. (ACM7-29)

Because of all the above divisions, local black community activists commented again and again how difficult it was to reach black people in our town of interest, let alone to mobilise them in local community struggles.

Conclusion

In our exploratory research social capital has been used as a heuristic device to generate explanations for why BME people may or may not be likely to become involved in the types of local community partnerships of the type emphasised in government policy to reduce health inequalities.

In our view, people are more likely to engage in local community activities if they live in communities characterised by high levels of social capital -- in other words, if they have a strong local identity - characterised by trust and mutual support between local neighbourhood residents, trust in the power of local government and services to meet their needs, and high levels of participation in a range of local informal and formal networks.

In this brief summary, we have presented a basic outline of the key issues involved in African-Caribbean people's engagement in informal and formal social networks in a South East town in England. In using the concept of social capital to structure and analyse our interviews with African-Caribbean people a number of categories have been constructed throwing up a range of factors which might impact on the likelihood that African-Caribbean residents will become involved in local community partnerships to reduce health inequalities.

In essence, our data highlights how that, although African-Caribbean identity serves as a potent and valued resource in the context of informal networks of family and friends, the construction of African-Caribbean identity beyond the interpersonal sphere makes it unlikely that African-Caribbean people will participate in the types of 'partnerships' that policy makers refer to.

A range of factors undermine (i) the development of a sense of cohesive African-Caribbean local identity, and (ii) a widespread involvement in local community networks; and (iii) a sense of trust and confidence in the local political process and in local community mobilisation, that would encourage such participation.

Differing experiences of social exclusion in various spheres of people's lives serve to undermine the likelihood of involvement in voluntary organisations or local community activist networks of any sort, including those around issues of specifically African-Caribbean interest.

The implications of this in terms of involvement in local community partnerships to combat health inequalities is clear. Participation for certain minority ethnic communities emerges as complex and multi-layered with a potential danger that focus on participation in the absence of attendant focus on ethnic identity may even increase, rather than decrease ethnic health inequalities. Indeed, on the basis of the issues raised by the research the local Health Action Zone of the town of interest commissioned further work that looked more specifically at a concrete health service in the local area (McClean & Campbell, 2001). Forthcoming articles (McClean, Campbell & Cornish, submitted) will examine in detail the factors enabling or constraining engagement with this local health service and look at how the configuration of the local health service could be changed to improve participation by the African-Caribbean community in our town of interest.

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SOCIAL CAPITAL/HEALTH CAPITAL: LAY CONCEPTS⁶⁴

*Mildred Blaxter*⁶⁵

The starting point of the project *Measuring Social Capital: how older people relate social capital to health* is the observation that although social capital is usually seen as a societal characteristic, its components are commonly measured at the level of individuals. There is broad agreement that the concept describes a collective dimension of society external to the individual, a resource which is a public good potentially available to all, which provides the machinery for facilitating consumer participation in decision-making and a sense of collective efficacy. There are much discussed problems about the level of analysis (e.g. Woolcock 1998, Lochner *et al* 1999). Nevertheless, studies of the relationship of social capital to health usually measure the concept by means of questions addressed to individuals. It is perhaps relevant that health itself is an individual attribute, and it is difficult to conceive of the 'health of a community' except as the aggregate of individual states and life expectancies.

Similarly, social capital is commonly operationalised as the aggregate, or mean, values of a series of individual attributes. We suggest that this is being done without any clear information about the meaning which the questions may have for the respondents of the relevant surveys. Do they themselves see these things as any sort of 'social capital', and are they thought of as associated with health?

The empirical study (in progress) is a qualitative exploration of lay perceptions of the relationship between 'community' and health. The emphasis is on older age, since it is here that the life-course can be reflected upon, and on people in disadvantaged social circumstances. The sample of approximately 40 is purposively selected to provide comparisons: starting with a core group of

⁶⁴ Fuller versions of this Working Paper with complete tables are available on request.

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people over 60 living in poor housing estates, others have been added who are younger, in better circumstances, or living elsewhere. Taped and transcribed interviews, on the topics of health and social history are being analysed to elicit the respondents' understandings of the various 'social capital' concepts and how they do or do not see them as related to the events of their health biography.

The purpose of this Working Paper is to offer a preliminary analysis of the actual wording of questions commonly offered to respondents of surveys as operationalisations of 'social capital'. The empirical study will subsequently compare these expressions with the words people themselves use when talking about the issues of communities and health.

Surveys used for the analysis of concepts and expressions

The 43 studies used in this review were defined as those which are:

Empirical surveys of individuals, or of the characteristics of areas or groups, which relate social capital to health, or consider the components of health related social capital.

This is obviously a theoretically-driven review, not an exhaustive account of the social capital literature, which many others have reviewed from various points of view. The literature used, though it attempts completeness for the most recent papers, has to be a selected one. The ideas and concepts of e.g. Putnam (1988, 1993, 1995), Coleman (1988, 1990) or reviewed by Portes (1998) have been extensively adopted by researchers in the health field, and it is from their work that many of the survey questions derive. They were not, however, originally being used to consider health as the outcome. The same is true of many studies of community empowerment which involve the idea of social capital (e.g. Saegert & Winkel 1996, Lake & Huckfeldt 1998). What was used as data here was solely those studies which have asked people about things held to represent their social capital (or 'asked' these questions of areas or groups by the use of area-level information) in the explicit context of health.

One relevant body of work is the long tradition of the study of social networks as a source of both psychosocial and practical support, linked to health outcomes. This body of work has not, until recently, used the specific idea of 'social capital', but clearly it is employing some of the same concepts. A few classical studies such as those of Berkman & Breslow (1983) or House et al (1982) were included in this analysis, simply as representative examples. Another contributing body of work is within the discipline of community psychology, where it has long been argued that concepts such as 'sense of community', or 'community competence', are collective characteristics, and features of social structure not of individual actors. Though this is not explicitly within the social capital field (and predates it), it is obviously relevant. Many of the measures used have been borrowed by social capital questionnaires. A few studies (e.g. Riger and Lavrakas, 1981; Glynn, 1981; Buckner, 1988; Davidson and Cotter, 1991) were included as examples of the contribution of this area of work.

Another, and more recently expanding, body of work is also represented rather than being covered exhaustively. This relates to the discussion of Wilkinson's (1986, 1994, 1996) view that, within developed nations, there is an association of health (as measured by mortality rates) with the degree of income inequality within a country or group rather than with absolute levels of affluence. This literature is growing large, but the place of a concept of social capital is not always clear. However, a few of these studies were included because social capital is given an explicit mediating role in the relative income hypothesis: income inequality leads to increased mortality via the breakdown of social cohesion and disinvestment in social capital (e.g. Kawachi & Kennedy 1997).

It is of course only recently, and notably in connection with the Health Development Agency Programme, that qualitative survey work has begun. All but a few of the surveys used have been quantitative. Qualitative studies were used here, however, to look at the wording of the prompts or general questions offered to respondents. In some cases qualitative work is testing interviewees' understandings of predetermined concepts, as a pilot

for quantitative work. In other cases, respondents' own words were categorised into social capital concepts but this can still be interpreted as the *researchers'* choice of the words which represent social capital.

Concepts and questions

Examining all these surveys, quantitative and qualitative, the concepts which were being operationalised in questions were listed. At the individual level relevant to surveys, they appeared to fall into the six categories of Table I. They might be given slightly different names: 'civic engagement' might use the same indicators as 'participation', and 'index of social ties' might be similar to a 'social network index', or questions about belonging or helping one another might be labelled 'social cohesion' or called 'reciprocity'. With very few exceptions, however, it could be argued that all the survey questions being used were relating, from the researchers' point of view, to this small number of general categories. (These were not the only variables being used, of course, since most surveys also included different sorts of data - situational variables such as age, sex, social class, education - either as additional elements of social capital or as intervening in the relationship between social capital and health).

The actual words offered to the respondents, for each component part of social capital, were then extracted. These were examined to ask: What concepts are they meant by the researchers to represent? Are there disciplinary differences? Are the same questions addressing different components of social capital? Are the questions using the same definitions of 'community' or of 'health'? What evidence is there of the validity of complex scales? How are the questionnaires addressing the problems of the individual and the social structure?

DISCUSSION

This review of the survey questions suggests a range of problems. Operationalisation of the concepts must depend on views of where social capital resides (e.g. the issue of levels of analysis), whether all types of social capital are comparable and can be aggregated, and who benefits from its existence and use.

Overlap and ambiguity

Firstly, at the simplest level, it is obvious that the concepts used are not entirely distinct or clear: the same questions are being used to measure different things. For instance, the quantity of personal social interaction -social network - is a relatively clear category, usually based on frequency of contact of different sorts with family, friends or neighbours. When the quality of this interaction is invoked, however, the category begins to overlap with that of reciprocity or cohesion. It is of course possible to have available, or to interact with, large numbers of family or other relationships, and still not experience help, acceptance, or support. Questions on social support ('who will help you if ...', 'who can you rely on for ...') are found as measures of both social networks and social cohesion. Similarly, 'feeling part' of a community is a measure of cohesion and also of the more active concept of participation. Neighbours 'looking out for each other' are seen in some surveys as representing trust, in others as reciprocity. Confidence and trust in institutions are closely related to civic participation, but questions about 'attempts to change things' are also used as measures of feelings of self-efficacy and control.

In short, though the same words are appearing again and again in different surveys (in part, of course, because questions are deliberately copied from one to another) they are not always held to be eliciting the same attitudes and emotions from the respondents.

Theoretical and disciplinary roots

In part, these ambiguities arise because the different perspectives which the field has drawn upon have each contributed different sets of values and assumptions.

Part of the appeal of the concept lies in its connection to established theories while at the same time offering perhaps profitable links to other disciplines and other forms of (human, economic, political) capital, each with its own indicators. The actual indicators used by the 'founding' theorists were not used in this review, because they were not primarily associated with

measures of health. However, there are striking disciplinary differences. Putnam (1998), interested in the well-being of the civic community, used as measures voting patterns, participation in organisations, and indicators of political involvement. Coleman (1988), viewing social capital as the obligations, expectations, information channels, norms and sanctions that encourage or prohibit certain kinds of behaviour, chose among the indicators of this such things as the size and structure of families, or church affiliation. Disciplinary differences persist: among political scientists, and also among psychologists, social capital refers mainly to attitudes (of trust, norms of reciprocity, and so on). Sociologists see it more as a structural variable, operationalised in networks and organisations. Both Putnam's and Coleman's sets of variables tend to reappear in the lists of health-related social capital indicators, though the connection with health becomes tenuous, and both the attitudinal and the structural variables are commonly mixed in the same survey schedules. Not only the ideas, but the actual 'instruments', where these are more complex scaled and validated measures, from a variety of disciplines may be used in the same survey. Examples come from psychology, sociology and political science.

Certain values and assumptions are evident in the wording of questions, in part because of these differing theoretical roots. Some of the survey items about participation -attending meetings, joining in protests, working for or contributing money to political parties, and so on - can be criticised as representing a very activist, politicised, view of citizenship, unlikely to mean much to the majority. Other questions actually using the word 'community' and referring explicitly to 'being on the board of community organisations', 'people in my community working together to affect decisions', or 'serving in a position of leadership in my community', have a distinctly middle-class tone. The translation of questions from North American society to others requires care: models such as that of Brehm and Rahn (1997) demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between civic engagement and interpersonal trust have been shown to be specific to the United States and not necessarily generalisable. It is possible that in the area of health, with very different contexts of health-service

provision, there may be even more striking differences between nations.

As noted earlier, the roots of this area of work are partly in community social psychology. Relevant concepts which have been adopted - collective efficacy, sense of collective competence, the integration and co-ordination of resources - may not be compatible with the idea of self-efficacy or individual feeling of control over life, though both may underlie the questions used for the concept of 'control'. Informal social control (a concept perhaps borrowed more from criminology) expressed as 'will people intervene in various situations', 'does the community police itself', may in fact be seen by respondents as in conflict with individual independence or autonomy, rather than a part of it.

The elasticity with which the term 'social capital' is used in different disciplines and approaches, spilling over into the actual indicators used, may threaten the utility of the concept. As Wall *et al* (1998) noted:

'There is a point where diverse interpretations create more confusion than clarity. Social capital is on the threshold of being used so widely and in such divergent ways that its power as a concept is weakened.'

Circularity and tautology

The thinking behind many of the survey questions seems in danger of tautology, perhaps related to this theoretical diversity and lack of conceptual clarity. Questions appear to measure both the things thought to *create* social capital and the things which are the *consequence* of greater or less amounts of social capital.

Social networks and support create social capital, but high social capital is what in turn creates cohesive societies. Civic participation by individuals, in Putnam's model, can be summed as a society's social capital, but at the same time it is democratic and participative organisation that enables citizens to become self-empowered. The rates of single parenthood which are a crucial determinant of low social capital in Coleman's formulation

are also seen as the result of diminishing social capital. Trust oils the wheels of social and economic exchange, and by allowing access to opportunity creates social capital. Portes (1998) noted that by the same token trust and reciprocity are the *consequences* of a stock of social capital. It has been noted, particularly, that crime rates are considered as a consequence of low social capital, but of course they can also be a *cause* of community distrust and conflict (Forbes and Wainwright, 2000). Techniques of analysis are badly needed which will help to unravel these issues of the direction of causality.

Where health is in question, there is a tendency to define as social capital whatever social indicators best predict health status. In particular, any characteristics at the community level which are seen as positive may be thought of as candidates for components of the concept. This becomes tautologous: social capital promotes good health, but is at the same time defined by those things known to be health-promoting

Weight and comparability of different measures; validity of complex scales

Even in the case of the most easily understood and most generally accepted measures, such as the relationship of social networks and support to health, questions of the value and weight of different measures arise. Can one sort of network substitute for another? How do different memberships relate to one another? Is all social capital of equal value, and do all networks (for instance) provide equal access to it? Is it possible that close networks supportive of the individual create conflict and exclusion in the community? Are these networks invariably positive in their effect, even for the individual, or can they engender health-harming behaviour? Is there some possible conflict between the values of close-knit interdependent networks and the values of self-efficacy and control? Social networks may be excluding, may serve antisocial or selfish ends, may put up barriers within communities, and may be a cause of conflict.

These questions begin to go beyond the scope of this analysis of the forms of questions: whether or not there is a 'dark side'

(Schulman & Anderson, 1999) to social capital is not an issue to be addressed here. However, it has to be noted that almost all the questionnaires which have been examined are designed on the *presumption* that social capital has a positive relationship to health.

In addition, influenced by Bourdieu's (1986) argument that the different sorts of social capital are interchangeable social resources which can be converted from one form into another, additive 'scores' are developed to summate an individual's or a collectivity's capital. Theoretical or methodological work on the construction and comparability of quantified scores is undeveloped.

Moreover, there is disagreement as to whether it is possible to conceive of social capital as a 'portable' resource, the value of which does not fluctuate depending on social context. Foley and Edwards (1999) argue that its 'liquidity' in fact depends on the specific social context in which it is found, and the access to social resources which it facilitates 'is neither brokered equitably nor distributed evenly'.

If very different types of measure - some representing opinions and attitudes, some describing actual structures and behaviours in individuals' lives or within communities - are to be combined as identifying 'social capital' then it might be suggested that at least there should be analysis of the extent to which they *do* aggregate into any meaningful whole. Are there individuals or groups where close networks and good support do not appear to have any relationship to ideas of civic participation or general reciprocity and trust?

The components of the more complex scales, and their relationship to simple measures, also need study. Kawachi et al. (1997) used three simple questions of the U.S. *General Social Survey* on perceived fairness, trust, and helpfulness, each in terms of 'most people', together with a count of the number of groups and organisations the respondent belonged to. This was not obviously a less efficient measure than immensely complex questionnaires with several dozens of individual questions to measure each concept - e.g. trust (Paxton 1999), social support (Turner & Marino

1994), control (Zimmerman et al. 1992) or social engagement (Veenstra 2000). Simple and complex scales could be examined to see what is added by elaboration. This has been done to a limited extent for the idea of social networks, where different dimensions such as density, cohesion, etc. have been looked at, but has been neglected for other concepts. Lessons might be learned from the history of 'locus of (health) control' scales - a relevant example, since several of the surveys here use these scales or components of them as part of their measurement of 'control'.

Levels of social capital

The problems associated with measurement at the individual and the societal level have already been mentioned, but some practical issues relating to the forms of questions may be added.

The search is really for *area* or *community* characteristics, as noted, and where the unit of analysis in surveys is the individual respondent, aggregate responses are being taken to represent the group or community. Where the unit of analysis is the area or society, structural types of variable may be used (not how many organisations respondents say they belong to, but how many organisations exist here; not how people feel about safety and trust, but actual rates of crime and violence; not whether individuals claim to use community facilities, but the range of facilities provided; and so on). Where the unit of analysis is the society/group, aggregated responses of individuals are also often used as representing structural variables, and equally, where the unit of analysis is the individual, their *perceptions* of the environment, local facilities, local problems, local services may still be used as individual variables.

There are several evident difficulties attached to this movement from one level to another. One is widely recognised: that objective and subjective definitions of the boundaries of an 'area' or a 'community' differ, and it may not be clear how respondents are envisaging their boundaries when they are answering questions about 'people round here', 'are you involved in community activities', 'do you take action on local problems'. Ideas of 'community' may be problematic because social relationships may

not be with 'neighbours' but with wider groups - and this may vary by social circumstances (class, mobility, income, etc.) of individuals and indeed social characteristics of neighbourhoods. These wider groups may still represent functional social capital, but they are less easy to tap into using questions about communities. Thus there has been research which attempts to ascertain what the personal definition of 'community' is (Morrow, 1999, Earthy et al., 2000).

Another issue, given less attention, is that objective structural variables and aggregated responses from individuals may not mean the same thing. The availability - or even usage - of local amenities says nothing about the distribution of that use: a small group in the community may have high social capital in terms of facilities while the majority of the population are excluded. Similarly, all the individuals of a community may perceive themselves as having close social networks, while the community as a whole is riven by conflict.

Indeed, similar results at different levels of aggregation - positive associations found at neighbourhood, at geographical area, or even at national levels - may not mean the same thing. There will obviously be different mechanisms at work, and different questions may be appropriate at each level.

Health as an outcome variable

Finally, there are issues of the outcome variable - health. The measures used in the surveys reviewed here are commonly either self-assessed health status (aggregated to form a group or community level measure) or, at the societal level, all-cause mortality rates. Other indicators have sometimes been used: rates of consultation; specific mortality or morbidity rates (especially CHD); physical functioning (e.g. SF36); measures of emotional health and well-being; standard indices of psychological health. It seems necessary, in fact, to pay greater attention to the health outcome measures. The relationship of a concept such as social capital to health may be very different for the two most popular indicators, mortality rates on the one hand and self-assessed health or wellbeing on the other.

Indeed, the measure of health used as an outcome has fundamental implications for the way in which social capital is being conceived. While of course psychosocial wellbeing is related to medically-defined morbidity and mortality (and there is good evidence that the simple self-rated health status question is a predictor of both, e.g. Idler and Benyamini 1997; Prevost and Blaxter 1993) nevertheless it has to be borne in mind that the determinants of self-declared 'health', and of disease, and of mortality, are not in fact the same. The things which affect wellbeing at the level of the small community may be very different from the processes connecting mortality rates at national levels. Self-rated health as an outcome may emphasise social relations or personal stress, while mortality has to take account of more external factors of the economic and physical environment. The relationship of self-rated health to any objective measure is known to show regularly patterned differences among social groups (age, gender, social circumstances, health experience) and some of the characteristics which affect this are the same ones that are involved in measurement of social capital, thus offering a further tautology. Moreover, self-rated health is a temporary measure, which can change with circumstances.

The actual pathways between the sort of data-items that have been discussed as 'measuring' social capital, and the specific health outcomes investigated, are a complex issue which requires further thought. The sophistication of the social capital measures is not matched by the definitions of the outcome measures, and it can be argued that, especially in the field of health, there is little real work yet on the *mechanisms* relating social capital to outcomes (except perhaps in the area of psychosocial stress). This neglect of possible mechanisms is less true in political science or network analysis, for instance, where social capital has been examined as an intervening variable in the achievement of career advancement (e.g. Burt, 1997). Precisely how social resources are made available to affect morbidity and mortality needs theoretical and empirical study.

One exception to this neglect is the work of Cattell (2000) who has attempted to show how network patterns and forms of social capital are not only created by differing neighbourhood

characteristics, but also enable the adoption of different coping mechanisms which are relevant to health.

Conclusions

Partly because of the multi-disciplinary roots of this concept, and partly because of some inherent ambiguities, its measurement in (predominantly quantitative) surveys has problems of tautology and lack of demonstrated validity. However, it has to be noted that (rather like the concept of 'social class') it obviously does have some meaning and some explanatory power, even if it is not altogether understood: the wealth of empirical studies offering clear associations cannot be dismissed. Whether people themselves perceive the issues in the same light remains to be studied.

The problem of the level of analysis is obviously a crucial one. It could be argued that work is needed to determine which are the most valid ways of measuring relevant attributes at the societal level. Direct measures of community characteristics such as area services and amenities, patterns of organisational membership, health service provision, rates of social 'pathology' and of objective population characteristics, have been used in studies, but rather rarely, and the problem often remains of the distribution of these measures. Just as average income level can conceal great inequality, so a community might score well on health-giving social capital but might distribute its benefits very unevenly, with a minority excluded. This minority might well be disadvantaged in health. Thus measures of the *dispersion* of social capital are also needed.

It has been noted that it is the less radical definitions of social capital, consensus models rather than those which emphasise power or conflict, which are most obviously being translated into measures. This seems to be associated with the fact that although discussion at a general level is more often in negative terms (a lack of social capital is bad for health, since it has these consequences of stress and social destruction, and thus the aim should be to increase social capital where it is lacking), actual measurement at the individual level is almost always in positive terms (the social reciprocity, trust, cohesion, which have been discussed). 'Scores'

are always in positive terms. It may be no more than the fact that, at the level of surveys, these are easier questions to ask. However, just as 'health' and 'disease' have been shown not to be simple opposites, it seems possible that positive and negative measures of social capital have a more complex relationship than simply being opposite sides of the same coin. This would have important implications for the choice of indicators.

TABLE I: SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS USED IN SURVEYS

(a) Measured at individual level

1. Social interaction, social networks, social support.	<p>Contact with friends/ family/ neighbours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality - frequency <p>Availability of network resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no. of children, relatives, household <p>Socialisation networks</p> <p>Social relations at work</p>
2. Reciprocity, social cohesion.	<p>How social networks used</p> <p>Who would expect help from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emotional - instrumental <p>Has someone to rely on</p> <p>Feel lonely</p> <p>Feel part of area</p> <p>Perceived norms of reciprocal help</p> <p>Perceived norms of informal social control</p> <p>Who used for information</p> <p>Perception of shared values</p> <p>Length of residence in area</p>
3. Participation, social engagement, commitment.	<p>Number of groups belonged to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal - informal <p>Level of involvement</p> <p>Political activity</p> <p>Religious activity</p> <p>Community activity</p> <p>Integration into neighbourhood</p> <p>Familiarity with neighbourhood</p> <p>'Sense of community' scales</p>
4. Trust.	<p>Confidence in institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at different levels <p>Trust in other people</p> <p>Perceived 'fairness' of life</p> <p>Perceptions of crime, safety, victimisation, etc.</p> <p>Confidence in political structures</p> <p>Shared values</p>

5. Control,
self-efficacy

Perceived control over
- own life
- own health
- community affairs
Perceived control which
organisations have
Satisfaction with amount of control
- at different levels
Measures of psychological control or
empowerment
- e.g. locus of control, self-efficacy,
sense of
coherence

6. Perception of
community level
social capital.

Degree to which societal-level
variables are
- identified
- seen as relevant to health
Examples: rating of
- local reputation, problems
- cleanliness, vandalism, graffiti
- area resources and services
- health services
- socio-economic inequality,
deprivation
-community activities

(b) Measured at group, area, societal level

All the above individual measures, aggregated.

Rates of population characteristics such as age, households, education,
immigration, stability of residence, etc.

Rates of area social characteristics such as crime, vandalism, homicide,
imprisonment, unemployment, single parents.

Environmental characteristics of areas such as pollution, street cleaning,
water, housing.

Area services and amenities such as transport, recreational facilities, shopping
facilities etc.

Voting patterns, levels of political participation.

Patterns and extent of organisational membership.

Rates of poverty, economic characteristics, extent of income inequality.

Health service provision and utilisation rates.

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SOCIAL CAPITAL-ISM'S LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

Alex Scott-Samuel⁶⁶

'(This paper) suggests that social capital is an elusive concept that is currently poorly specified, and that the use of the term is inherently problematic, and needs to be carefully critiqued and empirically grounded before it can be usefully applied in social policy formulations.' (Morrow, 1999)

'While the concept of social capital has had a meteoric rise in political, economic and public health rhetoric it remains to be fully defined and understood.' (Lynch et al, 2000a)

The cult of social capital-ism

It's interesting to view the current fascination with social capital in terms of similar fascinations with cults and religions. For example, like other belief systems, it's sufficiently broadly conceptualised to appeal to a wide range of believers from an equally wide range of ideological positions. For those on the political left, it carries the reassurance that there IS such a thing as society; for those on the right, it helpfully demonstrates that what people in poverty lack is connectedness, not money and services. Evangelism is widespread – based on an equally wide range of subjective, ascribed meanings. Expenditure on research and on policy action is occurring on a large scale, in the face of the continuing absence of any relevant supporting evidence.

Despite a wide reading of the relevant literature, I've seen nothing to convince me that constructing social capital adds any explanatory value to existing constructs and variables such as self-esteem, community participation and social networks. I'm strongly reminded of the way in which late 20th century health researchers rediscovered poverty by examining the unsurprising associations between housing tenure and health outcomes (council tenants do worse), and rediscovered unemployment's social impact through manipulating the (methodologically vacuous) Jarman index. In the same way, the eclectic mix constituting social capital will

⁶⁶ Liverpool Public Health Observatory

inevitably lead to the rediscovery of social networks and the strength of weak ties.

Reasons to be cheerful

But I'm a natural optimist, and despite my reservations, I do see some useful spin-offs from riding with the political glitterati of the developed world on this particular bandwagon. The first is the revival of community development (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). While the 1970s Labour government took fright when the Home Office's Community Development Projects began to grow critical teeth, and the 1980s Conservative government felt the need to suppress community development within the Health Education Authority, the present government appears to understand the progressive nature of autonomous community action. A second reason to be cheerful relates to the transformation of social into real capital – not just in terms of funding for community development, but also for useful research into psychosocial determinants of health and quality of life. An example is the Health Development Agency's Social Action Research Project – which in addition to small quantities of navel-gazing about the nature of social capital, is generating worthwhile community building in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods.

A further, more debatable reason to be cheerful concerns the way in which social capital is bringing meaning into the anomic lives of armchair liberals; Labonte claims that social capital 'allows elites who benefit from economic practices that undermine social cohesion to voice that loss without necessarily linking it back to those practices that privilege them' (Labonte, 1999).

Reasons to be gloomy

Perhaps the most serious problem with this *fin-de-siecle* phenomenon is the way in which it over-emphasises psychosocial determinants of quality of life at the expense of material ones. Nowhere is the inadequacy of the 'capital' metaphor clearer than with regard to this. Politicians and policy makers are more than happy to substitute high-sounding prescriptions for social capital in place of the necessary material investment of economic capital;

as Lynch and colleagues put it: 'it conflates the structural sources with the subjective consequences of inequality and reinforces the impression that the impact of psychosocial factors on health can be understood without reference to the material conditions that structure day to day experience' (Lynch et al., 2000b). For Portes and Landolt (1996) 'it is not the lack of social capital, but the lack of objective economic resources – beginning with decent jobs – that underlies the plight of impoverished urban groups.'

For many, the enthusiasm of the World Bank for social capital has negative implications in itself. While its substantive impact remains uncertain, the Bank's espousal of social capital-ism is seen as 'getting it off the hook' with regard to the structural violence which resulted from its policies of structural adjustment. In this context, social capital thus represents a tool of international politics rather than of social science or of public policy.

Before social capital can be taken seriously as a subject for scientific research, there is a wide range of methodological problems to be overcome. I've hesitated to refer to these because of my scepticism concerning such a project. However, I would propose that if such research has to be undertaken - in any discipline – then certain explicit prior assumptions must be spelt out: these relate to whether social capital is the dependent or independent variable; whether it's an attribute of individuals, communities (however defined) or both; and where it's located in an explicit model of the determinants of quality of life. In epidemiological research, an appropriate null hypothesis to be refuted, would be that the construct lacks validity and utility in explaining health-related well-being. Lynch and colleagues (2000a) are more positive: 'Our societies are divided by economic, racial, ethnic and gender inequalities that receive institutionalised political, legal and corporate sanctions. If we understand social capital as a societal-wide capacity for inclusiveness, human rights, social justice, and full political and economic participation, then indeed public health should invest.' Me, I'll hang on for a bit longer.

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APPENDIX

SOCIAL CAPITAL PROJECTS IN THE GENDER INSTITUTE AND PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM THEM

The Projects:

Henrietta Moore	Setting a national agenda for research into Children's well-being (HEA)	25.10.96/ 1.3.99
Virginia Morrow	Social Capital (research fellowship) HEA and Eleanor Rathbone	1.10.97/ 31.12.2000
Catherine Campbell/ Rachael Wood	Social Capital & Health (HEA)	1.4.97/ 31.4.98
Rachael Wood/ Catherine Campbell	Social Capital & Gender (HEA)	1/5/98 -31.9.98
Catherine Campbell/ Carl Mclean	Social Capital and health in multi ethnic communities (HDA)	1.7.99 / 28.2.01
Catherine Campbell/ Carl Mclean	Health in multi-ethnic communities- (Luton Health Action Zone)	1.3.01/31.8.01

Publications Arising:

1997 *Health and Well-Being of Children & Young People in the UK* (ed) HL Moore. London:Health Education Authority

1998 Wood, R. and Campbell, C. *Gender, social capital and health: a critical review*. Report to the Health Education Authority

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Forthcoming:

Campbell, C. and McLean, C. (in press) Ethnic identity, social capital and health inequalities: Factors shaping African-Caribbean participation in local community networks. *Social Science and Medicine*. 54 (10), March 2002.

Campbell, C. and Gillies, P. (in press) Conceptualising 'social capital' for health promotion in small local communities in England: a micro-qualitative study. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*.

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Campbell, C. and Mzaidume, Y. (accepted for publication) What is a 'health-enabling community'? The challenges facing community-led HIV-prevention in South Africa. *British Medical Journal*.

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Morrow, V. (Forthcoming 2001): 'Children's rights to public space: environment and curfews' in Bob Franklin (ed) (Second edition) *The Handbook of Children's Rights. Comparative policy and practice*. London, Routledge.

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C.Swann (ed) *Social Capital For Health: Insights From Qualitative Research*. London:Health Development Agency (chapters by Campbell & Mclean, Morrow)

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McLean, C. and Campbell, C. Locating research informants in a multi-ethnic community in England: Ethnic identities, social networks and recruitment methods.

Campbell, C. and McLean, C. Social capital, local community participation and the construction of Pakistani identities in England: implications for health inequalities policies.

McLean, C, Campbell, C and Cornish, F African-Caribbean interactions with health services: experiences and expectations as (re)productive of health inequalities

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Campbell, C, McLean, C and Cornish, F Social capital, participation and the perpetuation of health inequalities: obstacles to AC community participation in mental health consultative fora and partnerships.

Campbell, C, Gouws, E, MacPhail, C and Williams, B Social capital and sexual health amongst young people in a South African township.

Campbell, C, Williams, R and Williams, B Make or break: the role of stakeholders in community health projects in South Africa.

Campbell, C Bonds and bridges: the role of social capital in peer education programmes in highly marginalized settings?

Gregson, S, N Terceira, P Mushati, C Nyamukapa and C Campbell School education and avoidance of early HIV infection: the mediating roles of social capital and psychosocial factors amongst young women in rural Zimbabwe.

McLean, C, Marx, C and Campbell, C Advocacy for mental health in the Pakistani community of a small English town.

Morrow, V With Eva Gamarnikow, Sheila Riddell & Anne Phillips, 'Where's the gender dimension in social capital? Towards a feminist critique of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*.'

Morrow, V Searching for social capital in young people's accounts of network and neighbourhood: implications for health and well being. To be submitted to *Health Education*