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Portes is the author of some 200 articles and chapters on national development, international migration, Latin American and Caribbean urbanization, and economic sociology. His most recent books include *City on the Edge, the Transformation of Miami* (winner of the Robert Park award for best book in urban sociology and of the Anthony Leeds award for best book in urban anthropology in 1995); *The New Second Generation* (Russell Sage Foundation 1996); *Caribbean Cities* (Johns Hopkins University Press); and *Immigrant America, a Portrait*. The latter book was designated as a centennial publication by the University of California Press. It was originally published in 1990; the second edition, updated and containing new chapters on American immigration policy and the new second generation, was published in 1996.

Introduction

During recent years, the of social become one of the popular exports from sociological theory into everyday language. Disseminated by a number of policy-oriented journals and general circulation magazines, social capital has evolved into something of a cure-all for the maladies affecting society at home and abroad. Like other sociological concepts that have traveled a similar path, the original meaning of the term and its heuristic value are being put to severe tests by these increasingly diverse applications. As in the case of those earlier concepts, the point is approaching at which social capital comes to be applied to so many events and in so many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning.

claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources.

He seems to have run across the idea in the context of his polemic against orthodox labor economics, but he mentions it only once in his original article and then in rather tentative terms (Loury 1977). The concept captured the differential access to opportunities through social connections for minority and nonminority youth, but we do not find here any systematic treatment of its relations to other forms of capital.

Loury's work paved the way, however, for Coleman's more refined analysis of the same process, namely the role of social capital in the creation of human capital. In his initial analysis of the concept, Coleman acknowledges Loury's contribution as well as those of economist Ben-Porath and sociologists Nan Lin and Mark Granovetter. Curiously, Coleman does not mention

gain access to valuable assets is readily understandable. More complex are the motivations of the donors, who are requested to make these assets available without any immediate return. Such motivations are plural and deserve analysis because they are the core processes that the concept of social capital seeks to capture. Thus, a systematic treatment of the concept must distinguish among: (a) the possessors of social capital (those making claims); (b) the sources of social capital (those agreeing to these demands); (c) the resources themselves. These three elements are often mixed in discussions of the concept following Coleman, thus setting the stage for the uses and scope of the term.

Despite these limitations, Coleman's essays have introduced and given visibility to the concept (in American sociology) some of the mechanisms through which it is generated. The tight knit community of Jewish diamond traders in New York City is minimized by the dense ties among its members and the ready threat of ostracism against violators. The existence of such a strong norm is then appropriate by all members of the community, facilitating transactions without recourse to cumbersome legal contracts (Coleman 1988a:599).

After Bourdieu, Loury, Coleman, and others, the number of theoretical resources that have

been identified by the American

More recently, the emergence of

elements of the

Sources of Social Capital

Both Bourdieu and Coleman emphasize the intangible character of social capital relative to other capital and human capital heads, d(social)-119(capital)-819intheesr(tructurhd,

clarity is not the result of norm introjection during childhood, but is an emer-

As examples of the first function, we find a series of studies that focus on rule enforcement. The social capital created by tight community networks is useful to parents, teachers, and police authorities as they seek to maintain discipline and promote compliance among those under their charge. Sources of this type of social capital are commonly found in bounded solidarity and enforceable trust, and its main result is to render formal or overt controls unnec-

more of this form of social capital than do single-parent families or those where both parents work. The primary beneficiaries of this resource are, of course, the children whose education and personality development are enriched accordingly. Coleman (1988a:S110) thus cites approvingly the practice of Asian immigrant mothers who not only stay at home but often purchase second copies of school textbooks to help their offspring with their homework.

A second example of this function is in McLanahan & Sandefur's monograph

common emphasis on dense networks as a resource. This alternative stance which, in contrast to Granovetter and Burt, may be labeled "the strength of strong ties" is also evident in other areas of the social-networks-and-mobility literature. Onee.

trepreneurship, in which networks and the social capital that flows through them are seen as a keyem

possible, for example, that social capital in the form of social control may clash

ground for an intense community life and strong enforcement of local norms. The privacy and autonomy of individuals were reduced accordingly.

This is an expression of the age-old dilemma between community solidarity and individual freedom analyzed by Simmel ([1902] 1964) in his classic essay on *The Metropolis and Mental Life*. In that essay, Simmel came out in favor of personal autonomy and responsibility. At present, the pendulum has swung

Some regions of Italy have many active community organizations. These civic communities value solidarity, civic participation, and integrity. And here democracy works. At the other end are uncivic regions, like Calabria and Sicily, aptly characterized by the French term *incivisme*. The very concept of citizenship is stunted here. (Putnam 1993, p. 36)

In other words, if your town is civic, it does civic things; if it is uncivic, it does not.

Tautology in this definition of social capital results from two analytic decisions; first, starting with the effect (i.e. successful versus unsuccessful cities) and then working retroactively to find what distinguishes them.

More insidious, however, is the search for full explanation of all observed differences because the theoretical framework is too narrow to encompass all observed differences.

cally and empirically, from its alleged effects; second, establishing some controls for directionality so that the presence of social capital is demonstrably prior to the outcomes that it is expected to produce; third, controlling for the presence of other factors than can account for both social capital and its alleged effects; fourth, identifying the historical origins of community social capital in a systematic manner.

This task is doable, but time-consuming. Instead, the intellectual journey that transformed social capital from an individual property into a feature of cities and countries tended to disregard these logical criteria. The journey was fast, explaining major social outcomes by relabeling them with a novel term and then employing the same term to formulate sweeping policy prescriptions. While I believe that the greatest theoretical promise of social capital lies at the individual level exemplified by the analyses of Bourdieu and Coleman, it is the property of large aggregates. This conceptual departure requires, however, cit-

Conclusion

Current enthusiasm for the concept reviewed in this article and its proliferating applications to different social problems and processes is not likely to abate soon. This popularity is partially warranted because the concept calls attention to real and important phenomena. However, it is also partially exaggerated for two reasons. First, the set of processes encompassed by the concept are not

manifold processes as social facts to be studied in all their complexity, rather than as examples of a value. A more dispassionate stance will allow analysts to consider all facets of the event in question and prevent turning the ensuing literature into an unmitigated celebration of community. Communitarian advocacy is a legitimate political stance; it is not good social science. As a label for the positive effects of sociability, social capital has, in my view, a place in theory and research provided that its different sources and effects are recognized and that their downsides are examined with equal attention.

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