

LAWRENCE J. SAHA

## CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the key concepts of cultural and social capital in a global perspective. This will be done by first examining the origins of the two concepts and their relevance for education. Second the global implications of the concepts will be examined. Third, the relevance of cultural and social capital for understanding educational processes will be discussed. Finally, examples of cultural and social capital in educational contexts will be given to illustrate the global relevance of the concepts.

### 1. THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The concepts of cultural and social capital have become critical for sociological research in the last two decades. The two concepts are closely related, and both are part of a family of concepts having to do with various forms of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986) "Capital is accumulated labor . . . which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (p. 241). Furthermore, as Bourdieu notes, capital has the potential capacity to "produce profits". In this seminal paper, Bourdieu identified four types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. The concept of economic capital is best known and is a form which is convertible into money and property rights. Symbolic capital, which appears only in a footnote in Bourdieu's discussion, is a form of capital where the object is symbolically possessed and reflected in habitus, which are durable schemes of perception and action (permanent dispositions) (Madigan, 2002).

However it is the forms of cultural and social capital which concern us in this chapter. These two concepts are important because, as with other forms of capital, they can be converted into economic capital. Although the two concepts are closely related, they have different histories and are related to education in much different ways. Let us consider each concept in turn.

### 1.1 *Cultural Capital*

The first documented use of the concept of 'cultural capital' occurred in the research of Bourdieu and Passeron (1964; 1977; 1979) in their research on French university students. During the mid-1960s Bourdieu and his colleague were interested in how the university experience, particularly in the Arts Faculty, contributed to the perpetuation of elite status in French society. Furthermore, the researchers were not concerned with economic factors, but rather those cultural factors which explained the reproduction of elite status.

It was in this context that Bourdieu and Passeron developed the concept of cultural capital.

In its *objectified* state the concept of cultural capital includes knowledge and possessions that are reflected in books, art, and other cultural artifacts. The possession of cultural capital facilitates the participation or movement of the possessor in society, thereby bringing advantage in lifestyle or access to the valued institutions of society. Bourdieu and Passeron argued that through their university studies and experience, students acquired knowledge of the "high" culture which allowed its possessor to more easily circulate and take advantage of opportunities of the French elite. Being able to comfortably associate with this segment of society, the students were able to get better jobs and more promotion within these jobs. In other words, their cultural capital was converted into economic capital.

### 1.2 *Social Capital*

In its broadest sense, the concept of social capital refers to resources which are obtained through social relationships and connections with other people, be they family, community, work, or school. However, unlike its related concept, cultural capital, the underlying notion of social capital has a longer history in sociological thought, and is more complex in its diversity of definitions and analytical use. Although Coleman (1988) is usually credited for having developed and popularized the concept, it is generally agreed that the idea of social capital, in one form or another, appeared in sociological writing much earlier (Schneider, 2002). Coleman himself noted that the concept of social capital was first used by Loury in 1977 (1977), but Schneider argues that Park and Burgess (1921) implied the concept in their discussion of social contact and corporate action in social control (for which they credit Durkheim as their influence). Mead (1934) also referred to a similar notion when he defined social institutions as organized social attitudes and actions of individuals, and without which there would be no fully mature individual selves or personalities.

The notion of social contacts as productive resources in a wide range of social activities has found its way in a number of subsequent sociological writings. Janowitz (1975), for example, argued that social contacts within groups are central for social control and result in societal self-regulation.

Some researchers explicitly have linked the notion of social capital to economic returns. Over a period of two decades Lin (Lin, 1982; Lin, Vaughn, & Ensel, 1981)

has studied the importance of social resources, in particular social networks, as a mechanism for protecting and gaining resources. Most recently, Lin (2001) defines social capital as “. . . investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace” (p. 19). He puts forward a more precise conceptual definition of social capital which allows for its measurement in the analysis of a wide range of effects. He also develops a theory of social capital which takes into account the mobilization of social capital through purposive action. Lin’s theory represents the most elaborate attempt to understand how social capital brings advantage to those who possess and mobilize it in a wide range of social objectives.

Working in the same conceptual framework as Lin, N.D. De Graaf and H.D. Flap (1988), cite Bourdieu in developing their research and use the terms “social resources”, “personal contacts” and “informal contacts/sources” to explain differences in the influence of social capital on the attainment of occupational status and income in the United States, Germany and the Netherlands. The researchers found that personal contacts, or social capital, were more likely to be used for job getting in the United States, West Germany and the Netherlands, in that order. In all three countries, however, personal contacts were more important than formal methods for finding a better job.

Using the concept of social capital somewhat differently, Putnam (1993, 2000) has explicitly used the concept to explain civic engagement in Italy and the United States. Citing from Coleman, Putnam defined social capital in his Italian study as “. . . features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. . .” (Putnam, 1993, p.167). In his study of the United States, Putnam used the same concept to analyse what he argued was the declining level of civic and political participation. Thus declining group membership and group activities represented a decline in social capital.

From the above discussion it should be clear that the concept of social capital has become central to much sociological research. While related to the notion of social networks, social capital, as used by many researchers, is a much more precise concept which can be quantitatively measured. While much research has focused on social objectives such as occupational attainment, another area where social capital has had considerable impact is that of education. It is to the relationship between both cultural capital and social capital and their impact on education that we now turn.

## 2. THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL ON EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES

The person most responsible for linking cultural capital with education is Bourdieu, while for social capital it is Coleman. While both writers acknowledged other forms of capital with respect to educational processes, they seem to have had very little intellectual contact, and rarely cited one another’s work. As in the above section, it is easier if the contribution of these two forms of capital to education is treated separately.

### 2.1 *Cultural capital and education*

The origins of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital lie specifically in his educational research. During the mid-1960s, Bourdieu and his colleague Passeron were involved with a series of studies on French education. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). One of these studies was on university students in the Arts Faculty, who he considered to have a unique relationship with a society culture, compared to students in other academic disciplines. Although Bourdieu and Passeron accepted the importance of social and economic factors in explaining attendance and success at university, he wanted to focus on the influence of cultural factors on the educative process itself.

In one sense, Bourdieu and Passeron regarded all students as being exposed to the "high culture" of French society by their attendance at university. However he argued that those students from *bourgeoisie* backgrounds represent the end product of a long exposure to a life style which enables them to use or exploit the university in a way that those from disadvantaged backgrounds could not. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, university students from bourgeoisie backgrounds approach their studies much differently from the others, and their educational experience permeates all aspects of their lives, even the language they speak and the vocabularies they command. Thus they communicate better with their lecturers and their possession of elite culture enables them to transform this cultural capital into scholastic capital, that is, relevant knowledge related to their fields of study which will serve them later in life (Teese, 1997).

On the basis of their studies of French university students, Bourdieu and Passeron argued that they could explain how the French bourgeoisie elite and their "inherited" culture were reproduced legitimately through the workings of the French education system. Bourdieu and Passeron had introduced to the sociology of education the important concept of cultural capital and its relation to education. But more importantly, from this research they developed a theory of social reproduction, that is, an explanation for how the schools actually contribute to the reproduction of the class structure of society by means of an inherited culture, but which appears in society to be meritocratically acquired (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The concept of cultural capital, and its implications for the process of social reproduction, has become widely used in education research in many countries. Thus, the importance of culture as a form of capital which can be converted to other forms of capital, such as economic or occupational capital, has been found to be more or less a universal process. A number of studies using the concept illustrate this point.

Apart from Bourdieu's study in France, one of the earliest studies of cultural capital was conducted by DiMaggio (1982). Using data from a survey of about 3000 grade 11 students, he found that even after controlling for family background and measured ability, cultural capital variables had a highly significant impact on student grades, and for non-technical school subjects was almost as important as measured ability. DiMaggio (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985) extended his study of cultural capital to educational attainment, and found similar results.

P.M. De Graaf (1986) provided a further complexity to the findings in DiMaggio's work by demonstrating that financial resources and cultural resources (cultural capital) over time were not important in explaining the educational attainment of the two oldest siblings in families in the Netherlands. De Graaf's explanation was that the Dutch government had successfully eliminated differentiation according to family resources, and that cultural consumption by the parents explained little of the differences in the children's educational attainments. Social background, measured in terms of parental education and father's occupation, was a more important factor. However De Graaf argued that while his findings do support Bourdieu's argument concerning high status culture and cultural consumption, Bourdieu's further hypothesis concerning cultural consumption and educational attainment was not supported by his data because of the particular characteristics of the Dutch educational system.

Building on the already accumulating body of research, Lamb (1989; 1990) studied cultural consumption (attendance at Art exhibitions) among a sample of Australian secondary school students, and found that it was related to educational plans. However Lamb did find gender differences and that this cultural consumption pattern was more pronounced for boys than girls. However, he argued that this Australian pattern was due to a smaller difference among girls with respect to future educational plans.

Studies of cultural capital and education have begun to occur outside of North America and Europe with similar findings. In Hong Kong, Post and Pong (1998) investigated the impact of declining family size on the sex differences in educational attainment. Using census data, they found that between 1981 and 1991 the differences between boys and girls decreased. They attributed this decline to the increased educational attainment of mothers, which they argued represents "an omnibus measure of culture capital" (p. 108).

In many Asian societies such as Japan, Taiwan and China, there are rich traditional cultural practices which guide the daily lives of people. The knowledge of these cultural practices constitute a form of cultural capital which can be converted into other forms of capital. Zeng (1996) describes one example of these practices with respect to education. For some students it is common to use prayer tablets (*ema*), headbands (*hachimaki*), and charms (*omamori*) to give them personal confidence and solace. Zeng argues that differential access to, or use of, these cultural practices represents variation in the distribution of cultural capital in these societies.

The above examples largely support the original Bourdieu argument that cultural capital can be converted into scholastic capital, that is, forms of education success and attainment. The affect of educational attainment on other forms of life chances such as occupational attainment has also been documented. Thus, insofar as culture capital tends to be possessed and used by certain social groups in society, it represents an important variable in the process of social reproduction. However, do these processes operate in the same way with respect to social capital? We now turn to this issue.

## 2.2 *Social capital and education*

Coleman defined social capital in an educational context as "...social resources that children and youth have available to them outside schools in their family or community" (Coleman, 1997, p. 623). He saw it as consisting of social relationships with adults which students possess, and which provide advantages in a range of activities, in particular those relating to school activities. Defined in this way, social capital includes the interests of parents, the interaction patterns within families which relate to schooling, and similar contacts outside the family, such as the community, which influence the students' school performance.

Unlike its counterpart concept "cultural capital", social capital has found wide acceptance and use not only by sociologists, but economists and development planners. Lin (2001), for example, has recently summarized almost two decades of his own research into the importance of "social connections" and "social relations" for the achievement of various life goals. These concepts, of course, are related to social capital and the resources which flow from these two phenomena. Lin's earlier work primarily had been concerned with the importance of social capital and occupational status (Lin et al., 1981), and his recent attempts have been to develop a theory of how social capital works in various social settings.

Other researchers, however, have directed their attention to the importance of social capital more specifically with respect to various educational outcomes. One of the areas of much of this research has focused on migrant or minority status and the relationship between social capital and educational attainment. In trying to explain the different educational attainments of immigrant youth compared to native-born youth in the United States, White and Glick (2000) point out that human capital is not a sufficient explanation. They argue that differences in social capital must also be taken into account. Using longitudinal data, Glick and White found that social capital variables such as parental involvement in their student's school work, student strong commitment to family, student personal locus of control, and bilingualism were significantly important in determining who remained in high school, irrespective of migrant status and the possession of human capital in the home.

Also for the Latino minority group in the United States, Stanton-Salazar and his colleagues (Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, & Tai, 2001) found that low educational aspirations among low status adolescents was due to their reluctance to seek help from the resources available to them. In other words, due to a number of factors such as low English proficiency, these Latino adolescents were failing to mobilize the social capital which was available to help them.

Studies which have related social capital with various aspects of educational achievement or attainment have been conducted in other countries. For example Stevenson and Stigler (1992) never mention the word social capital in their comparative study of Japanese, Chinese and American primary schools, but their findings clearly indicate that the embedded nature of the Asian schools with home and family environments produce a continuity between home and school which they did not find in the American schools that they studied. They found that the relationship between parents and teachers in Asian schools produced complementarity rather than duplication. "Parents and teachers work together, but

do not duplicate one another's roles . . . Americans, by contrast, seem to expect that schools will take on responsibility for many more aspects of the child's life" (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 83).

However what was particularly important in the Asian schools was the emphasis on cooperative and group learning as opposed to individual achievement. This former type of learning context increased the social capital for each child and therefore increased the resources for the learning process. In effect, Stevenson and Stigler implicitly described how both cultural and social capital were maximized in the learning process in the Asian schools that they studied.

Another aspect of Asian society is illustrative of the role that social capital can play in furthering the educational progress of children. In most Western societies, single-parent families, particularly where the mother is the single parent, are often found to be detrimental to the education of children. However Pong (1996) found that in Malaysia this negative relationship does not necessarily occur. For the Malay ethnic group, and where the mothers are widowed, there is a strong cultural norm which requires that the extended families provide social and financial help in the raising of the children, including their education. In effect, as Pong points out, these collectivist ties provide the social capital necessary to overcome the absence of the father.

Teachers in Asian societies also are involved in the environment of social capital in education. Robinson (1994) found that in South Korea the custom of *ch'onji*, or the practice of parents giving "tokens of appreciation" to the teacher, contributed to the educational benefit of children. Even though the teachers denied that these gifts influenced their treatment of the students, they were nevertheless interpreted as expressions of parental concern for the children. They thus tended to call on these students more often, a practice seen as contributing to *palp'yo*, or the acquisition of valued speaking skills necessary for later public life. Thus, from the parents' point of view, *ch'onji* was a practice which helped to acquire social capital for the child in the educative process. As Robinson notes, this process "is an example of how economic capital can be converted to social capital" (1994).

Finally, a study of Palestinian high school students in Israel provides further evidence of the impact of social capital, even for a highly disadvantaged minority. Khattab (2003) found that in spite of their disadvantaged minority status, the Palestinian students held high educational aspirations, largely because of the parental aspirations for their children and the extent to which parents discuss education with them. Another interesting finding of this study is that the impact of cultural capital variables was reduced when the social capital variables were introduced into the analysis.

There are many other sources which document the universality of the impact of social capital on educational attainment (Saha, 2003). This should not be surprising given that social contacts and social relationships are fundamental to society itself. However it is clear that social capital manifests itself in a variety of ways in the way that it affects the education process.

Recently, however, it has been argued that as societies become more modern, they tend to become more individual-oriented, and that in fact social capital itself is

on the decline. Indeed, a similar question might be asked about cultural capital. This is the issue to which we now turn.

### 3. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL, EDUCATION AND GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is a concept which has become dominant in modern discourse. The concept describes a condition whereby the world is seen to be becoming more homogeneous with respect to a wide range of economic and social processes. The result of this homogeneity is the loss of the importance of the unique regional level. Terms such as the “global village” have come to describe the process and the loss of the “local village”. One of the assumptions of those who take this perspective is that there is an incompatibility between the two. In the context of cultural and social capital, there seems to be some evidence of this conflict. For example Demerath (2000) found that students can be subjected to two forms of cultural and social capital, that of a local traditional culture, and that of the school, a modernizing institution. In his study of students in Papua New Guinea he found that students often had to cope with the social and psychological consequences of the conflict between the collectivist demands of the local village culture and the individualist demands of the school. Both environments possessed their own forms of cultural and social capital, and the students had to learn how to manipulate their “social self” so that they would not lose their integration with one or the other.

In this context, it is important to note that all cultures have their forms of cultural and social capital. However the crucial issue in the case of contact between two or more cultures is which one is dominant. Therefore the issue of globalisation is the extent to which the “global” dominates the “local”, and whether the “global” in effect reflects a particularly dominant form of cultural and social capital, for example Western as opposed to non-Western, Christian as opposed to non-Christian, or individualist as opposed to collectivist.

Both cultural and social capital are likely to be affected by globalisation, but in different ways. For example, a local form of cultural capital, such as knowledge of indigenous art or literature, may be overtaken by a global form of art and literature knowledge, such as Western art and literature. Thus persons who had previously possessed highly valued local knowledge might find that that knowledge is no longer valued, and therefore is no longer cultural capital in the true sense of the concept. In other words, it cannot be exchanged for academic or economic capital.

Social capital stands to be affected by globalisation in a different manner. Social capital is embedded in social relationships. Clearly the globalisation process can change the value of a particular set of social relationships. Former relationships with local persons may no longer carry the same value as relationships with national or international persons.

However another manner in which social capital can be affected by the globalisation process is by its decline in absolute, not relative terms. This was the argument in Putnam’s work *Bowling Alone* (2000). Putnam argued that at least in the United States, social capital, as reflected in membership in various social,



religious and political associations, declined since the end of World War II. The data that Putnam used to support his argument suggests that the United States has become less of a community in the conventional sense, and more a society of individuals who behave much the same, but not as part of formal groups. Although he cites television viewing as one of the causes, one could say that globalisation, and the rise of the global village, have contributed to this process.

A counterargument to Putnam's hypothesis has been put forward by Lin (2001) who claims that the notion that social capital is declining is "premature and, in fact, false" (p. 237). Lin claims that the emergence of social networks in cyberspace represents a new form of social capital that transcends community and national boundaries, and will in time supercede personal capital in significance. Lin contends that cybernetworks represent social capital because they provide resources beyond mere information. Furthermore, he contends that unlike social capital in the conventional sense, where individuals in advantaged positions in society have greater access to resources, the new cybernetworks may represent a "bottom-up" globalisation process since the networks are not dependent on any dominant group.

Lin argues that cybernetworks can work within any social group or social institution. He develops a model in which social capital is a determinant of both instrumental (wealth, power and reputation) and expressive returns (physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction). However it is clear in the context of Lin's discussion that cybernetworks might also become important for education processes. The availability of knowledge and access to persons who are sources of knowledge, represent forms of social capital which are increasingly important for educational success. Thus cybernetworks and their implication for education, are part of the globalisation process.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural and social capital are two important concepts in understanding many economic and social processes in all societies. They have been found to be particularly important in understanding educational processes, and in particular why some children do well in school and others do not. The globalisation processes occurring in the world today are likely to increase, rather than decrease, the amount of cultural and social capital available. Furthermore access to cultural and social capital is likely to be less dominated by a particular social or national group, given the manner of access through cybernetworks. However little research has been conducted on this most current change in the globalisation process, and therefore many of the arguments remain to be tested.

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