

SOCIAL CAPITAL, SOCIAL INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a work of political philosophy. It aims to set out an egalitarian understanding of the promotion of social capital. The first chapter of the thesis is an introduction to social capital, and contains a normative criticism of contemporary social capital policy-making. A typology of theoretical approaches to social capital policies are outlined in the second chapter, including neoliberal constitutionalism, civic republicanism, and egalitarian pluralism. Of these approaches, egalitarian pluralism seems best able to promote social capital while balancing the competing values of freedom and equality. The third chapter builds on the egalitarian pluralist approach and investigates a relational egalitarian strategy for the promotion of social capital.

Keywords: democracy, egalitarian, ethics, ethos, exclusion, inequality, social capital.

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Montaigne describes overwrought works as smelling of 'oil and the lamp'—a scent which may be endemic to theses. If this thesis bears that aroma, I was not faithful enough in spending more time with the persons mentioned above. I wish that this thesis more accurately reflected the aims and opinions of others, for it would have fewer mistakes. Alas, this thesis and any errors in it are my own.

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CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS SOCIAL CAPITAL?

1.1 - INTRODUCTION

The phrase ‘social capital’ refers to the quantity and quality of relationships a person enjoys in his or her community. Although academic enthusiasm for social capital is recent, valuing human social networks is nothing new: archaeological research indicates that humans (and primates) have sought the benefits of social cooperation for millennia.¹ We have long recognized value in encouraging our children to attend those schools we regard as optimal *loci* for the formation of durable social networks.² We often celebrate those among us who have accumulated great stores of social capital, and praise them for having been ‘socially rich’ in a manner distinct from being financially wealthy.³ Even Euripides is reported as having observed that “it is a good thing to be rich, and a good thing to be strong; but it is a better thing to be beloved of many friends”.⁴

¹ See Coren L. Apicella et al., “Social Networks and Cooperation in Hunter-gatherers,” *Nature* 481, no. 7382 (January 26, 2012): 497–501, doi:10.1038/nature10736.

² See *Encyclopaedia Perthensis, or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, Literature, Etc. : Intended to Supersede the Use of Other Books of Reference* (J. Brown, 1816), 40: “Friendship, by the tender fympathies which it produces, is known to heighten our joy, and to foften our cares. By the attachment which it forms, it is often the means of advancing a man’s fortune in the world. When begun in youth, it has been found to grow up gradually, and to laft as long as life itfelf. Public education furnifhes the beft means of forming this amiable tie: it calls for the focial affections; it gives kindred fouls a better opportunity of meeting while they are moft fufceptible of friendship, and of all the generous paffions” [*sic*].

³ See William Allen; Mahin, Helen O. White, *The Editor and His People: Editorials by William Allen White*, (The Macmillan Company, 1924), 51–53: “The reason so many people lined up behind the hearse that held the kind old man's mortality was simple: they loved him. He devoted his life to helping people. In a very simple way, without money or worldly power, he gave of the gentleness of his heart to all around him. We are apt to say that money talks, but it speaks a broken, poverty-stricken language. Hearts talk better, clearer, and with a wider intelligence. . . . When others gave money—which was of their store—he gave prayers and hard work and an inspiring courage. He helped. In his sphere he was a power. And so when he lay down to sleep hundreds of friends trudged out to bid him good-by with moist eyes. . . .”

⁴ In D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *Sales Attici: Or the Maxims Witty and Wise of the Athenian Tragic Drama* (Edmonston and Douglas, 1867), 328–329. The original Greek reads: “οστις γε πλούτων ή σθένος μάλλον φίλων αγαθών πεπάσθαι βούλεται κακώς φρονει”.

As understood in this sense, usage of the phrase ‘social capital’ is nearly a century old. In 1916, L. Judson Hanifan suggested that ‘social capital’—which he described as “good-will, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals”—could accumulate, and that after enough social capital had accumulated, the resulting sum could somehow be used to forward “the general improvement of the community well-being” [*sic*].⁵ Hanifan’s work was not particularly influential, and social capital did not gain any currency as an academically serious concept until the 1980s. During the 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu critically employed the term⁶ in an attempt to shed light on the ways in which inequalities in social class and varying capacities for social mobility were impacted by hereditary or circumstantial factors. These factors were the social, cultural, and economic bequests of one’s family and social networks. A few years later, James Coleman joined Bourdieu in his critical examination of differing social conditions, observing that students with lower-quality social capital were more likely to drop out of high school.⁷

Bourdieu and Coleman were influential scholars within the discipline of Sociology, but it was not until the publication of the research that Robert Putnam conducted in Italy that social capital finally gained widespread academic and public attention. In 1993, Putnam published a study which aimed to link higher levels of social capital with higher levels of civic engagement.⁸ This work was perhaps most notable not for academic reasons, but rather for the attention it drew from politicians; after its

⁵ L. J. Hanifan, “The Rural School Community Center,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 67 (September 1, 1916): 130–131, doi:10.2307/1013498.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “Le Capital Social,” *Actes de La Recherche En Sciences Sociales* 31, no. 1 (1980): 2–3.

⁷ James S. Coleman, “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,” *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (January 1, 1988): S95–S120.

⁸ Robert D Putnam and Robert Leonardi, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

printing, Putnam soon became the guest of prominent leaders like Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. The success of this initial research led Putnam to embark on a five-year study of social capital in America, and in turn, the book-length publication of this larger study, *Bowling Alone*, truly opened the social capital floodgates. In this book, Putnam charges American politicians and policy-makers with the task of generating more social capital. He writes that “leaders and activists in every sphere of American life must seek innovative ways” to “create new structures and policies (public and private)” to facilitate the generation of social capital.⁹ Putnam regards the generation of social capital with seriousness, and cautions his readers that “figuring out how to renew our stock of social capital is a task for a nation and a decade, not a single scholar, or even a single group”.¹⁰

Putnam’s call was heard. The problem of renewing social capital became a task for many nations over many decades. Since the publication of *Bowling Alone*, the OECD,¹¹ IMF,¹² World Bank,¹³ WHO,¹⁴ United Nations,¹⁵ and many governments—including those of the USA,¹⁶ UK,¹⁷ and Canada¹⁸—have each incorporated social capital concepts and language into a range of policy initiatives. In many cases, these initiatives

⁹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 1st ed. (Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2001), 403.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 404.

¹¹ See Tom Healy et al., *The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital* (Paris: 2001).

¹² See Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*, IMF Working Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, April 1, 2000), <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=879582>.

¹³ The World Bank has a designated ‘Social Capital Thematic Group’ which comprises 250 World Bank employees. For an example of their work, see: Christiaan Grootaert, *Measuring Social Capital an Integrated Questionnaire*. (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2004), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10052013>.

¹⁴ See Lorenzo Rocco and Marc Suhrcke, “Is Social Capital Good for Health? A European Perspective” (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2012).

¹⁵ See United Nations, “Copenhagen+5 Outcome Document,” accessed November 30, 2012, <http://www.earthsummit2002.org/toolkits/women/un-doku/un-conf/c+5%20outcome-2.html>.

¹⁶ See The White House, “Faith-Based and Community Organizations,” accessed November 30, 2012, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/reports/faithbased.html>.

¹⁷ See Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, “Europe: The Third Way/ Die Neue Mitte,” in *The Politics of the New Centre* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2000), 157–177.

¹⁸ See Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Government of Canada, “Voluntary Sector Initiative Impact Evaluation: Lessons Learned from the Voluntary Sector Initiative (2000-2005)”.

represent serious financial investments. Corresponding to this political interest is enormous academic interest: there is an observable wealth of quantitative and qualitative research on social capital in academic publications across the disciplines of Sociology, Economics, and Political Science. The findings of this research constitute alluring material for policy-makers: a multitude of recent academic studies in social capital show that there is a very strong positive correlation between social capital and improved well-being, lower health care costs, better workplace productivity, and lower crime rates.¹⁹ Studies also show that persons who enjoy more social capital are more likely to have access to superior opportunities in education and employment.²⁰ Social capital has been the subject of intense research (in 2002, nearly one scholarly peer-reviewed article related to social capital was published each day,²¹ a rate which has not subsided)²² and a truly stunning array of handsomely funded policy initiatives.²³

However, such enthusiasm runs the risk of obscuring a crucial problem, a problem which forms the focus of this thesis. The prospect of creating more social capital may be

¹⁹ Cristina Caperchione et al., “Associations Between Social Capital and Health Status in an Australian Population,” *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 13, no. 4 (2008): 471–482, doi:10.1080/13548500701694235; Margareta Lindén-Boström, Carina Persson, and Charli Eriksson, “Neighbourhood Characteristics, Social Capital and Self-rated Health - A Population-based Survey in Sweden,” *BMC Public Health* 10 (January 2010): 628–642, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-10-628; Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2001; Ed Diener et al., *Well-Being for Public Policy*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009); Steven F. Messner, Eric P. Baumer, and Richard Rosenfeld, “Dimensions of Social Capital and Rates of Criminal Homicide,” *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 6 (December 1, 2004): 882–903, doi:10.2307/3593047.

²⁰ Ronald S. Burt, “The Contingent Value of Social Capital,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 1997): 339–365, doi:10.2307/2393923.

²¹ *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper* (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2002), 9.

²² As an example, there were 418 SSHRC grants related to social capital between 1998 and 2012, totaling \$18,163,621.33. See Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, “Results,” *Awards Search Engine*, 2013, <http://www.outil.ost.uqam.ca/CRSH/Resultat.aspx>.

²³ See Ben Fine, *Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly* (Pluto Press, 2010). Fine, a prominent Marxist economist, observes: “where is the literature that says policy set out to create and/or to deploy social capital and demonstrably succeeded with the positive impact that was expected and intended? It is practically non-existent, and none springs to my mind as particularly prominent and convincing” (197). Fine is correct: no reliable way to promote social capital has yet been identified or scientifically proven.

an enticing prize for researchers and policy-makers. However, because “the freedom to associate necessarily entails the freedom to exclude”,²⁴ any promotion of social capital thus runs the risk of creating or exacerbating inequalities of social capital. In the case of social capital, these inequalities are especially meaningful, because social capital, insofar as it is politically promoted, is understood to be a valuable good that most persons would desire more of, rather than less.²⁵ This thesis investigates social capital and its implications for social policy in order to identify a way to promote social capital that does not worsen existing inequalities.

The subsequent sections of this first chapter consist of a detailed introduction of social capital (§1.2), an enumeration of various policy objectives concerning social capital (§1.3), and a normative argument advocating the initiation of philosophical involvement in social capital scholarship (§1.4). Social capital scholarship notoriously suffers from a lack of definitional and methodological stability. The analysis contained in this thesis finds a limited amount of overlapping definitional consensus between different disciplinary usages of social capital, and a low overall level of methodological regularity in social capital metrics. These definitional and methodological observations are followed by an account of the range of social capital policy initiatives and outcomes that are of interest to policy-makers. The final subsection of the first chapter describes a weighing of the aforementioned definitional and methodological difficulties against some of the troubling aspects of contemporary social capital policies. These considerations result in

²⁴ Amy Gutmann, *Freedom of Association* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 11. Pettit and Brennan defend exclusion convincingly, writing that “if all agents have complete freedom of entry into any esteem association, then individuals would enter until the esteem value of belonging was driven to zero”. See Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit, *The Economy of Esteem: An Essay on Civil and Political Society* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 211.

²⁵ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Revised Edition (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 79.

the conclusion that the most useful problem for social capital scholars to solve is not definitional custodianship or methodological standardization, but that of locating a serious normative voice in current political processes.

The second chapter of the thesis consists of an examination of the ways in which the assumption of different theoretical perspectives would limit the ability of governments to intervene in social capital, as well as a consideration of the philosophical benefits and detriments of each approach. Following Cohen and Rogers,²⁶ three different theoretical approaches to the promotion of social capital are considered: neoliberal constitutionalism (§2.2), civic republicanism (§2.3), and egalitarian pluralism (§2.4). It is concluded that egalitarian pluralism provides the most effective theoretical basis for justifying the kinds of policy interventions that governments wish to employ.

The third chapter articulates a path for those interested in a normatively adequate approach to the promotion of social capital. Relational egalitarianism is identified as a useful theoretical basis for equally promoting social capital at an interpersonal level in §3.1. A ‘social ethos’ is derived from this relational egalitarian position in §3.2, and the various means of support which are necessary for the maintenance of this ethos are considered in §3.3. In total, the many social, economic and political benefits of social capital suggest that governments are unlikely to withdraw support for social capital on the basis of poor definitional or methodological foundations. The thesis concludes that there remains much to be done to ensure the normative soundness of political involvement in social capital.

²⁶ Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” in *Associations and Democracy*, ed. Erik Olin Wright (Verso, 1995), 7–98.

1.2 - DEFINING SOCIAL CAPITAL

All academic inquiries pertaining to social capital are complicated by the lack of a universally acceptable definition: social capital is a ‘contested’ term.²⁷ A second difficulty is that researchers, at least on the whole, are quite unclear about how to measure social capital. These points are not merely academic, and present serious problems for policy makers who would promote social capital.²⁸ But it is perhaps the case that the most important knowledge gap in the social capital literature concerns neither measurement nor definition, but rather a lack of hard answers to normative questions about the impact on equality of policies which promote social capital.

As a preliminary definition, the phrase ‘social capital’ shall refer to the quantity and quality of relationships a person enjoys in his or her community. An understanding of social capital is illuminated by a consideration of the distinction between concepts and conceptions, a distinction recognized by social capital researchers, who characterize social capital “as a genotype with many phenotypic applications”.²⁹ At the level of a concept, Robert Putnam’s lead is programmatic: almost all researchers would agree with Putnam’s assertion that “the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value”.³⁰ An overwhelming consensus is found in the social capital literature concerning

²⁷ See Dario Castiglione, “Introduction: Conceptual Issues in Social Capital Theory,” in *The Handbook of Social Capital*, ed. Dario Castiglione, Jan W. van Deth, and Guglielmo Wolleb (Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

²⁸ See Nan Lin, “A Network Theory of Social Capital,” in *The Handbook of Social Capital*, ed. Dario Castiglione, Jan W. van Deth, and Guglielmo Wolleb (Oxford University Press, 2008), 54.

²⁹ Frane Adam and Borut Rončević, “Social Capital: Recent Debates and Research Trends,” *Social Science Information* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 158.

³⁰ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2001, 19. The OED defines a social network as “a system of social interactions and relationships; a group of people who are socially connected to one another”. See “Social, Adj. and N.,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), <http://www.oed.com.proxy.queensu.ca/view/Entry/183739>.

this point.³¹ But, beneath the banner of an overall concept, a number of smaller conceptions of the ‘value’ of social networks—and how any such value might be measured—can be observed in the social capital literature. Because the literature is expansive, it is easy to take a less than positive view of this diversity of conceptions of social capital. As Michael Woolcock notes, it sometimes seems as though social capital is capable of “becoming all things to all people, and hence nothing to anyone”.³²

Careful, step-by-step analysis can help clarify the term’s meaning. The first big distinction between different conceptions of social capital can be thought of as paralleling the longstanding distinction between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative and qualitative researchers have both agreed with the central idea that social networks have value. But, the stance that a social scientist takes with reference to this methodological divide shows whether or not—and if so, how—he or she thinks it is possible for that value to be measured. Some social capital researchers, like Robert Putnam, focus their epistemological attentions on the analysis of statistical data. The textbook example of this would be the work of those economists who estimate the value of social capital in ‘income equivalent’ terms.³³ This kind of work tends to find favor with policy makers, who are infamously uninterested in the nuances of conceptual or philosophical debate, and instead prefer to work with easily measurable resources such as

³¹ See Sonja Haug, “Soziales Kapital. Ein kritischer Überblick über den aktuellen Forschungsstand” (Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, 1997), <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/d7/de/publications/report/soziales-kapital-ein-kritischer-uberblick-uber-den-aktuellen-forschungsstand>; also A. Portes, “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology,” *Annual Review of Sociology* (1998), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223472>; and Messner, Baumer, and Rosenfeld, “Dimensions of Social Capital and Rates of Criminal Homicide.”

³² Michael Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes” (presented at the International Symposium on the Contribution of Human and Social Capital to Sustained Economic Growth and Well-Being. Human Resources Development Canada and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, 2000), 7.

³³ See John Helliwell and Haifang Huang, “Well-Being and Trust in the Workplace,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 12, no. 5 (October 2011): 747–767, doi:10.1007/s10902-010-9225-7.

metric tons and dollars. Social capital can and has been defined in ways which satisfy these quantitative preferences, and it is certainly possible to operationalize social capital as a resource. A good example of this is in Nahapiet and Ghoshal, who characterize social capital as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit”.³⁴

Science has yet to quantify all aspects of social life, though, and researchers of a more broadly qualitative stripe demand attention. These researchers may define social capital as “a culture of trust and tolerance, in which extensive networks of voluntary associations emerge”.³⁵ This kind of definition clearly maintains commitment to the idea that social networks have value. But determining whether or not a social network supports a culture of ‘trust’ or ‘tolerance’ would require pursuit, in some detail, of the actual lived experiences of the human beings who had roles in those networks. For researchers engaged in such pursuits, statistical analysis may be orthogonal to the ‘real value’ of social capital, a value which may, for some, be regarded as sufficiently ineffable to all but guarantee as otiose any attempts at quantitative measurement.

The second big distinction between different conceptions of social capital is that of individuals and collectivities. Here we can ask whether memberships in social networks are valuable as private goods possessed by individuals, or as ‘local’ public goods possessed by collectivities. Those who take an individualistic view tend to characterize the value of social networks as including anything that an agent can take

³⁴ Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal, “Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage,” *The Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 2 (April 1, 1998): 242, doi:10.2307/259373.

³⁵ Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 188.

away from a group that is of benefit to a that agent. An example is observable in the work of Baker, who characterizes social capital as “a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests”.³⁶ Other researchers go further in attempting to calculate the value of social capital, and consider not just the social resources that an individual puts to use, but also as-yet inactive resources that are potentially usable by individuals. Here, consider Bourdieu, who defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”.³⁷ And, at the opposite end of the individual-collectivity spectrum, we find researchers such as James S. Coleman, who hold that “as an attribute of the social structure in which a person is embedded, social capital is not the private property of any of the persons who benefit from it”,³⁸ or Brehm and Rahn, who characterize social capital as “the web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitate resolution of collective action problems”.³⁹

Adopting an individualistic or a collectivistic view of social capital amounts to more than the simple identification of a philosophical preference. Here, governments should not simply listen to one kind of researcher, because the kinds of methods that would need to be employed when promoting individual social capital are different from those that might be used to promote collectivistic social capital. If a government thought

³⁶ Wayne E. Baker, “Market Networks and Corporate Behavior,” *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no. 3 (November 1, 1990): 619, doi:10.2307/2781065.

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*, ed. A.H. Halsey et al. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 51.

³⁸ James S Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 315.

³⁹ John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, “Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital,” *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 999, doi:10.2307/2111684.

that social capital should be promoted individually, they might offer participation vouchers to individuals, as Philippe Schmitter has proposed:

An appropriate means for doing this would be to create a system of ‘secondary citizenship’, in which individuals would be issued vouchers at regular intervals for the support of associations and allowed to distribute them according to their own, self-assessed interests.⁴⁰

Yet in a more collectivistic model, groups and associations could be the recipients of government funding. An example of what this might look like in practice is observable in the Government of Canada’s Voluntary Sector Initiative,⁴¹ which sought “to improve the quality of life in Canada”⁴² by empowering some 870,000 community, charitable, and on-profit organizations.⁴³ Groups which demonstrated involvement in the public good⁴⁴ and willingness to cooperate with government qualified for tax exemptions.

Finally, it is important to note the distinction between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ forms of social capital. The difference between these two forms of social capital is defined as being dependent on the strength of interpersonal connections; although slightly dated, this is referred to in the literature as the strength of a relational ‘tie’. The strength of a relational tie is described by Granovetter as a “combination of the amount of time,

⁴⁰ Philippe C. Schmitter, “The Irony of Modern Democracy and the Viability of Efforts to Reform Its Practice,” in *Associations and Democracy*, ed. Erik Olin Wright (Verso, 1995), 171.

⁴¹ The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) was a \$95 million project that started in 2000. It was effectively dismantled in 2006 by Harper’s Conservative federal government. See: Rachel Laforest, *Voluntary Sector Organizations and the State: Building New Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁴² Government of Canada, “Goals of the VSI,” n.d., <http://www.vsi-isbc.org/eng/about/goals.cfm>.

⁴³ Keith G. Banting, *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada: Roles and Relationships* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 11. Such organizations have been formally recognized as builders of social capital; for a decisive statement, see Government of Canada, “Voluntary Sector Initiative Impact Evaluation.”

⁴⁴ Kathy Brock, “Sustaining a Relationship: Insights from Canada on Linking the Government and the Third Sector” (presented at the International Conference of the International Society for the Third Sector Research, Dublin, 2000), 3, <http://www.queensu.ca/sps/publications/workingpapers/01.pdf>. More specific examples of the kinds of services to be offloaded include health, education, child care, and elder care.

the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and [...] reciprocal services”.⁴⁵ Bonding social capital is usually characterized by local connections, often of high strength, and may be thought of as a ‘thick’ tie. In contrast, bridging social capital is typified by non-local connections which arise between different social groups. Bridging capital is furthermore capable of being sustained through the maintenance of fairly weak connections, and can be conceived of as a ‘thin’ tie. For example, an insular religious community which does not permit outside visitors may have great stores of bonding capital,⁴⁶ while having little or no bridging capital. As for bridging capital, the best example is that of young, upwardly mobile social networkers who are too busy to develop strong ties but have many superficial ones (consider ‘Facebook’). Maintenance of each contact in such social networks requires judicial relational accounting on a person basis, resulting in high bridging, but no bonding capital.⁴⁷

Variations in approaches to thinking about the value of social networks are typically not as black-and-white as the preceding analysis might suggest. These various approaches are of course not incompatible with each other. A number of good studies employ or build upon previous works of different methodological bearings. Many social capital researchers will endorse both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Indeed, some insightful qualitative studies reveal the very circumstances or questions to which

⁴⁵ Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (May 1, 1973): 1361.

⁴⁶ Bonding capital can be negative (e.g., criminal organizations), and is frequently tied to out-group antipathy and exclusionary behavior; on this view, it is therefore possible to have an increase in bonding capital in one region of a society while experiencing a net degradation of overall social cohesion.

⁴⁷ Bonding capital is not entirely bad. Small social networks such as families depend upon the existence of bonding capital. Still, Putnam observes that a wand that could magically create bridging social capital would be “golden”, and describes a “second-best” wand which could only create bonding capital as “aluminum”. See Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2001, 362.

quantitative methods are best applied.⁴⁸ Further, Robert Putnam writes that social capital is “simultaneously a ‘private good’ and a ‘public good’ ”.⁴⁹

Yet, with all this said, it seems fair, in conclusion, to point out that the overlap of conceptions does not indicate confusion, or a lack of rigor. Instead it seems more reasonable to think that this variety evinces a flexibility which makes it possible for researchers to place a unique emphasis on one or more aspects of social capital in their individual studies. True to this conclusion, this wide variety of emphases has been seen in a positive light by many social capital researchers. Some of these researchers write that differing conceptions of social capital are useful, because they provide “a common frame of reference around which a range of agreements and disagreements can be discerned and refined across disciplinary lines and professional boundaries”.⁵⁰ After these considerations, it seems reasonable to adopt the initial definition proposed by this thesis: that social capital should refer to the quantity and quality of relationships a person enjoys in his or her community.

1.3 – THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital has been shown to have wide-ranging benefits for both individuals and society. As one senior policy official in the UK put it, “social capital has now been shown

⁴⁸ Edward R Tufte, *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 1.

⁴⁹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2001, 20. Technically, social capital is *not* non-excludable, and thus ought to be referred to as a local public good.

⁵⁰ Michael Woolcock, “Civil Society and Social Capital,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, ed. Michael Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 199.

to relate to nearly all of the key policy objectives of modern societies and government”.⁵¹ Policy-makers thus pursue a number of strategies to facilitate social capital’s capacity to achieve these objectives. The following section enumerates some of these policy outcomes and strategies.

First, social capital has been famously credited with improving the capacity of human beings to ‘flourish’. Social capital has been referred to as a policy “panacea”,⁵² and as a “magic bullet”.⁵³ Policy-makers truly have a wide range of rhetorically promising options to draw upon when attempting to promote social capital to politicians and citizens. Consider that social capital is said to improve productivity in the workplace.⁵⁴ Or again, community health experts and epidemiologists find that being a part of social networks with more, rather than less value, results in better overall health for citizens.⁵⁵ Then there are criminologists, who contend that better levels of social capital result in neighbourhoods with lower rates of crime.⁵⁶ So, too, the possession of social capital has been correlated with greater academic achievement and better high-

⁵¹ David Halpern, *Social Capital* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 285. Studies even claim that social capital is good for primates; see Joan B. Silk et al., “The Benefits of Social Capital: Close Social Bonds Among Female Baboons Enhance Offspring Survival,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 276, no. 1670 (September 7, 2009): 3099–3104, doi:10.1098/rspb.2009.0681.

⁵² Sarah A. Lovell, “Social Capital: The Panacea for Community?,” *Geography Compass* 3, no. 2 (2009): 781–796, doi:10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00208.x.

⁵³ John Harriss, *Depoliticizing Development: The World Bank and Social Capital* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 64.

⁵⁴ Ray Reagans and Ezra W. Zuckerman, “Networks, Diversity, and Productivity: The Social Capital of Corporate R&D Teams,” *Organization Science* 12, no. 4 (July 1, 2001): 502–517, doi:10.2307/3085985. Reagans and Zuckerman write that “R&D teams that have more dense networks of interaction achieve a higher level of productivity than do those with sparse networks” (512).

⁵⁵ Martin Gächter, David A. Savage, and Benno Torgler, “The Role of Social Capital in Reducing Negative Health Outcomes Among Police Officers,” *International Journal of Social Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2010): 141–161. Gächter et al. claim social capital is “extremely effective in reducing negative health outcomes” (157).

⁵⁶ I. Semih Akçomak and Bas ter Weel, *The Impact of Social Capital on Crime: Evidence from the Netherlands*, IZA Discussion Paper (Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), 2008), <http://ideas.repec.org/p/iza/izadps/dp3603.html>. Akçomak and ter Weel found that “a one standard deviation increase in social capital reduces crime by roughly around 0.30 of a standard deviation” (24).

school graduation rates.⁵⁷ Other researchers hold social capital to be a key determinant in predicting positive self-assessments of subjective well-being.⁵⁸ These benefits are considerable, and are all said to develop when the human capability of ‘affiliation’ is exercised.⁵⁹

All of these goods for citizens can potentially also be good for governments. This is especially or perhaps most obviously the case when the improved health of citizens results in lower health care costs, or where lower crime rates allow governing institutions to save on law enforcement costs. More socially, it has been claimed that increased levels of social capital engender a more participatory democratic culture. Putnam famously explains that networks which have created more, rather than less, social capital, are so very valuable because they are able to more effectively “facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved”.⁶⁰ Common sense here recommends that the prospect of a more competent electorate provides good pragmatic and epistemic reasons to endorse social capital. As Cheryl Misak writes, it seems intuitively true that when “more people deliberate and more reasons and experience go into the mix, it will become more likely that the

⁵⁷ Coleman, “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital.” Coleman writes that “both social capital in the family and social capital outside it, in the adult community surrounding the school, showed evidence of considerable value in reducing the possibility of dropping out of high school” (S118-S119).

⁵⁸ John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam, “The Social Context of Well-Being,” *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* 359, no. 1449 (2004): 1435–1446. Helliwell and Putnam write that “social capital is strongly linked to subjective well-being through many independent channels” (1435).

⁵⁹ “Affiliation” is the seventh item on Nussbaum’s list of capabilities; see *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79.

⁶⁰ Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 67. Note that Putnam distinguishes civic engagement from social capital; for Putnam, civic engagement describes activities such as getting out to community polling booths, participating in Parent-Teacher Associations, and going to church; social capital is the value that results from such activities.

decisions made will account for the reasons and experience of all. The more likely, that is, that the answer will be right”.⁶¹

Policy analysts can point to beneficial market outcomes when arguing in favor of the promotion of social capital. Here, it is useful to follow Joseph Heath’s analysis of the benefits of cooperation.⁶² Heath writes that the primary positive economic outcome to be associated with social capital is how multiple actors can put aside their individual pursuits to work together in achieving a greater overall result. The classic example is Rousseau’s Stag Hunt, where hunters who are individually capable of catching small rabbits are only able to take down a much larger and meatier stag by finding ways to cooperate with one another.⁶³ Heath continues, writing that the second positive outcome from cooperation is that of gains from trade, where an increase of social interaction enables a more optimal distribution of goods, due to differences in the ability of a producer to supply a resource, and the widely varying preferences of those who consumers who buy it. Third, participating in social networks allows multiple agents to pool their resources in order to provide insurance for uncertain futures.⁶⁴ Finally, social capital can function as a non-monetary kind of currency to obtain goods or services that would otherwise have to be purchased.

Achieving this wide range of beneficial outcomes has prompted policy-makers to investigate three general forms of positive policy interventions. These include creation,

⁶¹ Cheryl Misak, “A Culture of Justification: The Pragmatist’s Epistemic Argument for Democracy,” *Episteme* 5, no. 01 (2008): 104, doi:10.3366/E1742360008000257.

⁶² Joseph Heath, “The Benefits of Cooperation,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 34, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 313–351, doi:10.2307/3876386. Heath lists five benefits, of which three are reproduced here.

⁶³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 163. For a more nuanced account, see Skyrms (2003).

⁶⁴ Heath, “The Benefits of Cooperation,” 322–324.

liquidation, and redistribution.⁶⁵ For policy-makers, creating net gains of social capital is the true big-ticket prize. If a little bit of anachronistic latitude can be permitted, a number of methods for the political creation of social capital can be seen as having long been employed throughout history.⁶⁶ For instance, tax exemptions were afforded to religious organizations in ancient Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon, Persia,⁶⁷ and Constantinian Rome.⁶⁸ Tax exemptions were officially granted to charitable and religious organizations in the United States and England in 1894⁶⁹ and 1601,⁷⁰ respectively, and modern descendants⁷¹ of these laws continue to provide tax exemptions for recipient organizations which can demonstrate that their functions are of some public benefit.⁷²

Policy interventions which attempt to liquidate social capital are also essential to achieving the beneficial outcomes listed earlier. Although social capital is generally touted as being of public benefit, there are negative forms of social capital which are truly detrimental to the public. Prominent examples in the social capital literature include criminal organizations, cartels, and hate groups. Criminal social networks can have value for their members in exactly the same manner as other, non-criminal networks do, although here the kinds of desires for collective action that unite such groups is decidedly

⁶⁵ Vivien Lowndes and Lawrence Pratchett, "Public Policy and Social Capital," in *The Handbook of Social Capital*, ed. Dario Castiglione, Jan W. van Deth, and Guglielmo Wolleb (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 679.

⁶⁶ Halpern, *Social Capital*, 29.

⁶⁷ Erika King, "Tax Exemptions and the Establishment Clause," *Syracuse Law Review* 49 (1999): 973.

⁶⁸ Chris Kemmitt, "Rfra, Churches and the Irs: Reconsidering the Legal Boundaries of Church Activity in the Political Sphere," *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 147.

⁶⁹ See "The Income Tax of 1894," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 9, no. 2 (January 1, 1895): 223–234, doi:10.2307/1885603. According to the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, taxes shall not apply to "associations organized and conducted solely for charitable, religious, or educational purposes, including fraternal beneficiary societies, orders, or associations" (229).

⁷⁰ For a reproduction of the 1601 text of the Statute of Charitable Uses, see Gareth H Jones, *History of the Law of Charity, 1532-1827* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 224–228.

⁷¹ The substantive content of the 1601 Statute of Charitable Uses currently remains law in Ontario: see A. H. Oosterhoff, "The Law of Mortmain: An Historical and Comparative Review," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 27, no. 3 (July 1, 1977): 277, doi:10.2307/825569.

⁷² See "Charities Act 2006," Text, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/50>.

antisocial. Another example here could be that of ‘old boys’ clubs’, where members may collude to enact social closure, corner a market, or secure some social or economic goods for members at the expense of non-members.⁷³ Modern freedom of association laws make it difficult for governments to truly liquidate such forms of social capital, because they guarantee that persons with antisocial intentions can assemble without interference as long as they have not actually committed a crime. Even more frustrating is the fact that, despite best attempts to dissolve criminal organizations, publically detrimental social capital can persist long past the commission of a crime, and endure even throughout the incarceration of criminals.⁷⁴ Policy-makers nonetheless do attempt to divide and dissolve such groups, and have employed crime-fighting techniques to weaken the ill effects of such organizations.

Finally, although policy-makers have generally been lured by the goal of creating as much social capital as possible, some have attempted to broach the more finely-grained problem of redistributing social capital. The problem is that the value of social capital is an ‘epiphenomenon’ of social networks. Although social networks can be easily rearranged, doing so without any loss to the capital that accrues from these networks is not so easy. Consider the Cultural Revolution in China, where, according to Thomas Bernstein, 1.2 million urban youths were sent to the countryside between 1956 and 1966,

⁷³ Steve McDonald, “What’s in the ‘old Boys’ Network? Accessing Social Capital in Gendered and Racialized Networks,” *Social Networks* 33, no. 4 (October 2011): 317–330, doi:10.1016/j.socnet.2011.10.002. McDonald finds that “people in white male networks receive twice as many job leads as people in female/minority networks” (317).

⁷⁴ During incarceration, criminals may make even more social capital: consider the observation that “prison is little more than college for criminals”, in Charles M. Jr Harris, “Prison Overcrowding - The Time for Policy Change Has Come,” *Florida State University Law Review* 18 (1991 1990): 507.

and 12 million between 1968 and 1975.⁷⁵ Although these forced migrations might be viewed as having effected a redistribution of social capital, among other things, the net result was overwhelmingly negative, as many relocated persons perished terribly, and arguably the result for China was an overall decline in social capital. As Stephen Durlauf explains, it is a real problem that “any interference [in the ways in which people freely choose to associate] may create behavioral responses in associational choice that will undermine the original policy...the policies themselves may be rendered ineffective”.⁷⁶ Future efforts may be able to address this problem, but this can certainly be said to have been an issue in those policies which result in the deaths of citizens, as seen in the case of the Cultural Revolution.

1.4 - SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL POLICY

Promoting social capital may contribute to inequalities⁷⁷ in human welfare,⁷⁸ or in actual human functioning.⁷⁹ Persons with little social capital may be disadvantaged in their levels of wellbeing, and in their opportunities to develop their capacities. Insofar as some

⁷⁵ Thomas P Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 2. According to more contemporary estimates (see: Lida Fan, *Social Policy and Migration in China* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10477550>), the Cultural Revolution saw the Chinese Government rusticate “more than 17 million urban-educated youths” (36).

⁷⁶ Steven Durlauf, “Associational Redistribution: A Defense,” *Politics & Society* 24, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 405.

⁷⁷ Here it may be helpful to defer to Charles Tilly, who defines inequality as an “uneven distribution of attributes among a set of social units such as individuals, categories, groups, or regions”. See *Durable Inequality* (University of California Press, 1999), 25.

⁷⁸ Roger Crisp, “Well-Being,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2013, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/well-being/>. ‘Social capital’ resonates with both the ‘welfare’ literature and the ‘flourishing’ literature.

⁷⁹ Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1995), 39.

individuals have more social capital than others, the far-reaching and impressive benefits of social capital, as described in the previous section, may be unevenly enjoyed.⁸⁰ Many commentators are aware of this problem of inequalities of existing distributions of social capital, and one influential scholar has observed that “while social capital exists in all societies, it can be distributed in very different ways”.⁸¹ Though there is an awareness of the connection between social capital and inequality at an academic level, it is not yet clear that policy-makers recognize inequalities of social capital as a serious problem. However, there are several reasons for policy-makers to be concerned about inequalities when promoting social capital.

First, there is the fundamental egalitarian principle that persons should be treated with equal concern and respect⁸² by public institutions, and have equal human rights to the protection of their fundamental interests. On this view, it is unfair for some to have less of a socially important resource than others. Inherent in the very principle of citizenship, as T.H. Marshall argues, is the idea that all citizens have equal rights.⁸³ Moreover, empirical research suggests that it is socially and psychologically harmful for persons to experience inequality.⁸⁴ Additionally, inequality can have a negative effect on

⁸⁰ The relationship between social capital and the benefits mentioned in the last section may be correlative or somehow causal. While this is an interesting and unanswered question, it is beside the point.

⁸¹ Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Value*, May 12, 1997, 379, http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/f/Fukuyama98.pdf.

⁸² Ronald Dworkin, “Do Liberty and Equality Conflict?,” in *Living as Equals*, ed. Paul Barker (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 39–58.

⁸³ As an example of this commitment to equality is observable in T.H. Marshall, who writes that “all who possess the status [of citizenship] are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed”. See “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Inequality and Society: Social Science Perspectives on Social Stratification*, ed. Jeff Manza and Michael Sauder (New York, NY: Norton, 2009), 149.

⁸⁴ Ming Wen, Louise C. Hawkey, and John T. Cacioppo, “Objective and Perceived Neighborhood Environment, Individual SES and Psychosocial Factors, and Self-rated Health: An Analysis of Older Adults in Cook County, Illinois,” *Social Science & Medicine* 63, no. 10 (November 2006): 2575–2590, doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.06.025.

the public culture of a society, on relations of trust, civility and fellowship, thereby harming the haves as well as the have-nots.⁸⁵

For those who accept one or more of these reasons, it will make sense that governments ought to operate in ways which do not further contribute to inequalities of social capital. But recognition of this point this brings forth a new, somewhat more complicated problem. According to the working definition offered earlier in this chapter, social capital is a relational good enjoyed by persons engaged in social networks. And, as described in §1.3, there are good reasons for governments to use their finite resources to fund social networks, and thereby promote social capital. On the negative side of this, however, is the likely result that different social groups will compete for access to, or dominance of, those governmental resources.⁸⁶

In particular, Charles Tilly's formal analysis of the structure of inequality suggests that governmental resources dedicated to the promotion of social capital will be subject to exploitation⁸⁷ and opportunity hoarding,⁸⁸ whereby one group of agents has exclusive control of a specific resource. In cases of exploitation, a categorical distinction⁸⁹ is made between the controlling agents, who are the major beneficiaries, and secondary contributors, who are only permitted conditional access to the relevant

⁸⁵ For an excellent synoptic survey, see Stefan Gosepath, "Equality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring, 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/equality/>.

⁸⁶ This problem is particularly likely when groups receive direct funding, but seems unavoidable even if social capital is promoted individually. For example, although Schmitter's participation 'vouchers' are distributed to individuals, the vouchers are to be redeemed by groups themselves (Schmitter 171) for reimbursement or support from the government. These vouchers could easily become a commodity.

⁸⁷ Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, 86–91, 117–146.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 91–95, 147–169.

⁸⁹ Tilly gives a number of examples of categorical distinctions. For example, "marriage licenses underscore the line between married and unmarried". See *Ibid.*, 197.

resources.⁹⁰ Cases of opportunity hoarding are similar, except that the valuable resource is controlled by ‘in-group’ beneficiaries who “do not enlist the efforts of outsiders [and] instead exclude them from access to the relevant resources”.⁹¹ In both cases “a boundary coexists with well-defined unequal relations across that boundary [and that] the boundary and the unequal relations reinforce each other”.⁹² Here, it seems that Tilly’s points are particularly germane to any governmental efforts to promote social capital:⁹³ although it would truly be unfair for some persons to access less government-backed social capital than others, the nature of groups and associations and their exclusive memberships makes it probable that exploitation and opportunity hoarding of social capital will occur, and actually be funded by the state.

In cases where contract law obtains, governments are able to step in and have a hand in breaking up collusive efforts which qualify as exploitation or opportunity hoarding. But it is so very difficult to see how exploitation and opportunity hoarding could be regulated in small social gatherings which are protected by freedom of association laws. Consider, too, that it is precisely this kind of informal group which is most likely to generate social capital, and that such groups often gather spontaneously. And, even in the case of less ‘impromptu’ groups, decisions regarding membership still typically take place at what Jon Elster has characterized as the level of “local justice”.⁹⁴ At the level of local justice, it is executive agents within organizations that are solely responsible for the allocation of memberships, and these persons are not bound by any

⁹⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁹¹ Ibid., 91.

⁹² Ibid., 87.

⁹³ Ibid., 199.

⁹⁴ Jon Elster, *Local Justice: How Institutions Allocate Scarce Goods & Necessary Burdens* (Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 1993). Here Elster contrasts ‘local’ justice to ‘global’ and ‘political’ justice.

legal obligations to guarantee impartiality or equality when assessing how to treat would-be members. In fact, the only binding code for local justice is that code which guarantees the ‘agent’ of local justice complete freedom in deciding who to include or exclude. Here, freedom of association promises that “just as an individual has a right to determine whom (if anyone) he or she would like to marry, a group of fellow-citizens has a right to determine whom (if anyone) it would like to invite into its political community”.⁹⁵ Given that these freedoms are so universally respected, it is hard to see how governments could possibly promote social capital without also exacerbating inequalities of social capital.

The problem, then, is one of finding a way to promote social capital while avoiding inequality, and while also respecting our important freedoms of association. Upon breaking this problem into its components, three key propositions are involved. The first proposition is a normative claim implicit in many charters of rights and freedoms: governments ought to treat all of their citizens with equal concern and respect.⁹⁶ The second is also a normative claim guaranteed by law: people should be free to associate as they choose. The third claim is the newcomer, and is a normative claim without constitutional or legal status: social networks have sufficient value as a public good to warrant being promoted politically.⁹⁷ The first two claims are familiar; the claim to equality is one which, in contemporary politics, is often presented as being in ‘natural’ tension with the legal claim to freedom, despite the fact that freedom is guaranteed

⁹⁵ Christopher Heath Wellman, “Immigration and Freedom of Association,” *Ethics* 119, no. 1 (October 1, 2008): 110–111, doi:10.1086/592311.

⁹⁶ Dworkin, “Do Liberty and Equality Conflict?,” 39–58.

⁹⁷ The claim that social capital is a valuable public good seems intuitively plausible. Some may disagree on substantive philosophical grounds, but even so, the proposition retains interest as a problem impacting both equality and freedom as long as policy-makers continue to spend millions on promoting social capital.

equally to all.⁹⁸ This tension is heightened by the potential for increased exclusion and inequality found in the third claim. In order to relieve this tension, some way to promote social capital without trampling freedoms or contributing to inequalities must be found.

An easy path is to drop one of the three claims entirely. If equal concern and respect for citizens ceases to be a constraint, it is possible to promote social capital without considering any limits on freedom of association. Alternatively, our associational freedoms could be eliminated, or severely invaded and regulated, as might be seen in a state where central planning contrived ways to ensure that social activities were of equal benefit to all. Another option is that the idea of promoting social capital could simply be dropped. This would restore the level of tension between equality and freedom to a normal level. However, the first two possibilities entail the forfeit of important democratic values, and the third fails to advance the current project. The ideal path is to find a way which is committed to all three propositions. Furthermore, any successful attempt to do so will help to clarify and relieve pre-existing tension between equality and freedom of association, which was a serious problem, even before social capital.

In spite of working with a loosely defined concept, no methodological regularity, and a nearly total lack of results, policy makers continue to promote social capital. These kinds of lax practices can be seen as standard government procedure, and may be viewed as unproblematic. But the key point made in this chapter was that the very nature of social groups entails the possibility of exclusion, and, in turn, the exacerbation of inequalities. In the case of social capital, these inequalities are meaningful, because social

⁹⁸ See Dworkin, "Do Liberty and Equality Conflict?," 39–58. For an example pertaining to social capital, consider the broad associative freedom afforded to gangs or hate groups despite their antisocial intentions.

capital seems to be a good that most persons would desire more of, rather than less.⁹⁹ With this in mind, it makes sense that governments ought to avoid promoting social capital in ways that worsen existing inequalities, or in ways that create new inequalities, or in ways that disrespect freedom of association. So, although a number of commentators have agreed that “it is probably too late to ask whether policy makers should seek to use or intervene in social capital”,¹⁰⁰ it is not too late to try to develop strategies to limit the ways in which policy makers intervene in social capital. The goal, then, is to find ways for policy makers to achieve their desired policy outcomes while minimizing inequality and exclusion. This task is taken up, on a broad scale, in chapter 2.

⁹⁹ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 79.

¹⁰⁰ Lowndes and Pratchett, “Public Policy and Social Capital,” 703.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

2.1 – INTRODUCTION

This second chapter examines the ways in which the assumption of different theoretical perspectives may limit the ability of policy-makers to intervene in social capital with particular focus on the philosophical benefits and detriments of each approach. For guidance in this regard, it has been useful to import aspects of the pioneering work of Cohen and Rogers in the field of secondary associations. In their book, *Associations and Democracy*, Cohen and Rogers develop a typology of three dominant political views: neoliberal constitutionalism, civic republicanism and egalitarian pluralism.¹⁰¹ Neoliberal constitutionalism is characterized as a theory which supports those attempts to advance the general welfare of a state which do so while preserving a “fundamental *right to liberty*”.¹⁰² Next, Cohen and Rogers define civic republicanism as an anti-pluralist form of democracy which emphasises the deliberative pursuit of a common good, and the insulation of that common good from faction.¹⁰³ Finally, they define egalitarian pluralism as a pluralistic form of political democracy best characterized by the striving for greater equality for all participants in political processes.

Cohen and Rogers’s selection of neoliberal constitutionalism, civic republicanism, and egalitarian pluralism are certainly debatable. Yet it should be noted that these three political ideologies hold explanatory value insofar as they correspond with the three “core

¹⁰¹ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 11. More basically, these terms might be described as liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 12. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 22.

values”¹⁰⁴ empirically observable in nearly all political debates over the last two decades.¹⁰⁵ These core values are also three in number, and have been described in other contexts as the being those values of limited government, traditional morality, and egalitarianism.¹⁰⁶ Studies conducted by both pollsters and academics show that persons’ orientations with regards to these core values tend to “inform their positions on specific policy issues”.¹⁰⁷ These divides will seem perfectly familiar after looking at keywords: according to researchers, politicians hoping to appeal to supporters of limited government frequently utter “enterprise”, “interests”, “private”, and “trust”; meanwhile, those who exalt the common good of traditional morality will often say words like “culture”, “morals”, and “values”; finally, from those politicians wishing to appeal to the egalitarian conscience, “chance”, “equal”, “fair”, and “opportunity” are often heard.¹⁰⁸

The goal in this chapter is not to defend a particular model of ideologies. Rather, it is hoped that looking at social capital from different ideological angles will help to increase our understanding social capital, and thereby relieve some of the tension that arises from the introduction of a new idea. To this end, this second chapter will examine of each of the three theories from Cohen and Rogers’ political typology with specific reference in each case to social capital. Each of these three investigations will begin with a review of the key normative claims characteristic of each theory. These claims will adhere strictly to the descriptions of the three theories presented by Cohen and Rogers in

¹⁰⁴ David Doherty, “Presidential Rhetoric, Candidate Evaluations, and Party Identification: Can Parties ‘Own’ Values?,” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 420, doi:10.2307/20299745.

¹⁰⁵ This claim refers to data collected in the analysis of “National Election Study (NES) data from 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 along with content analysis of candidate rhetoric”. See *Ibid.*, 419.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 431.

Associations and Democracy.¹⁰⁹ To flesh out the relation between each theory and social capital, an example of a social capital policy that would be consistent with each set of normative claims will be provided. An example of the sort of social group which might be expected to embody the normative claims of each theory will then be presented. For each of these social groups, an ‘excluding rationale’ will be sought; this amounts to finding a characteristic kind of reason or judgment that the members of a neoliberal, civic republican, or egalitarian pluralist group would regard as acceptable grounds for exclusion. Taken together, it is hoped that all of these details will help to make it possible to evaluate each theory more precisely, especially in terms of how much promise each one holds with regards to promoting the values of freedom and equality while avoiding the exacerbation of inequalities of social capital. In closing, after each theory has been examined, a brief discussion section will review and comparatively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each theory.

2.2 – NEOLIBERAL CONSTITUTIONALISM

On Cohen and Rogers’s account, neoliberal constitutionalism is a theory which advances “the normative ideal of an efficient ‘constitution of liberty’, a set of social and political arrangements that simultaneously protects a fundamental *right to liberty* and advances the *general welfare*”.¹¹⁰ For neoliberals, the most central normative commitment is freedom. Cohen and Rogers describe neoliberals as interpreting this fundamental right to liberty as

¹⁰⁹ Within the political theory literature there are differing and competing conceptions of neoliberalism, civic republicanism and egalitarianism; Cohen and Rogers’s account is not uncontroversial.

¹¹⁰ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 12. Emphases in original.

meaning that, “as a general rule...it is permissible for the state to restrain individual choice only where the restraints are necessary to protect choice itself, that ‘liberty should only be restrained for the sake of liberty’ ”.¹¹¹ Cohen and Rogers point out that the neoliberal conception of the general welfare is based on Pareto-optimal arrangements,¹¹² and note that, “given their emphasis on the values of choice and efficiency, neoliberal constitutionalists are strong proponents of competitive markets”.¹¹³

The generation of an example of a neoliberal policy for the promotion of social capital is limited by Cohen and Rogers’s characterization of neoliberalism as desiring a “sharply ‘limited’ state”.¹¹⁴ In practice, this means that a neoliberal government will be inclined to take a ‘hands-off’ approach. This observation is made by neoliberal policy analysts Meadowcroft and Pennington, who argue that promotion of

social capital requires that the role of government be confined to the classical liberal functions of providing an institutional framework that protects private property, punishes violations such as theft and fraud, and supplies a relatively minimal set of collective goods where transaction costs in the public sector might be lower than under private alternatives.¹¹⁵

On this view, the generation of social capital is impeded by interventionist government policies or practices.

In fact, there is some evidence which suggests that social capital might be unintentionally diminished by government action. Robert Putnam observes that, although

¹¹¹ Ibid. Note that this is consistent with the negative characterization of liberty developed by Berlin. See: Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*. (Oxford University Press, 1969), 121–122.

¹¹² Neoliberals generally support a Pareto-optimal arrangement. See Matthew D. Adler, *Well-being and Fair Distribution: Beyond Cost-benefit Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 53.

¹¹³ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 12.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁵ John Meadowcroft and Mark Pennington, *Rescuing Social Capital from Social Democracy* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2007), 101–102.

the slum-clearing policies of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s were well-intentioned, they also “destroyed highly effective social networks”.¹¹⁶ Other policies may impact social capital more subtly; one such example here is that of post-war Britain, where housing policies made it more difficult for people to associate:

...urban redevelopment reeked [*sic*] havoc with the social capital of many working-class neighbourhoods. New ring roads split natural communities in half and high rise housing left ‘neighbours’ without a garden fence or a street corner across which to relate to one another. In a very physical form, the horizontal relationships so central to social capital formation were destroyed in favour of the anonymous verticality of the lift shaft, the stair well, and the underpass.¹¹⁷

The fact that some ill-considered governmental action has undermined social capital does not prove that governmental action per se is detrimental to social capital or to its equal distribution. However, it seems plausible that some policies might be moderated to lessen their potential negative impacts on social capital. This idea has gained some currency in policy circles, where David Halpern notes that “at least one government—the Irish—is actively considering a policy of social capital ‘audits’”, which would check “the likely impact of future policies on social capital”.¹¹⁸

The approach of monitoring policies and their effects on social capital would be acceptable to neoliberals, with two further stipulations. First, the monitoring process would have to be non-invasive, and stop short of impeding the freedoms of citizens. Second, it would have to be demonstrated that the benefits gained from these strategies outweighed the cost of monitoring. If these requirements of freedom and efficiency are met, achieving social capital gains through monitoring of government policies would be

¹¹⁶ Putnam, ‘Bowling Alone’, 76.

¹¹⁷ Lowndes and Pratchett, “Public Policy and Social Capital,” 690.

¹¹⁸ Halpern, *Social Capital*, 288.

fully consistent with neoliberal values. Such studies could help governments avoid acting in ways that impinge the creation and flourishing of social capital in freely associating social groups. In application, this sort of program of research would probably not be acceptable to neoliberals at regional levels, where the immediate effects of local policies on social capital would likely be obvious. But such a service could make sense at a national level, with researchers playing a coordinative role, interfacing between regions.

One example of a social group that might result from a non-interventionist policy like the one described above could be that of a community police force. Due to the isolated nature of many smaller communities, the establishment of community police forces can sometimes help to take travel and personnel strain off of regional or national governmental police forces. Positions in a new community force could be assigned to the most effective and efficient local candidates available, thereby helping to stimulate the local workforce and economy. Perhaps more importantly for social capital, in the case of young offenders, dispensing local, and often ‘softer’ forms of justice, has been found “to be far more effective than the more severe but uncertain, distant and delayed punishment of the formal criminal justice system”.¹¹⁹ Big-city officers visiting small rural areas may not develop meaningful relationships with the locals, and come across as cold and impersonal. Meanwhile, local officers might be able to bond as a group, and develop the kinds of relationships with both local citizens that, in time, build social capital. In this way, a neoliberal government which took a hands-off approach and permitted groups of locally-organized law enforcement solutions to handle certain kinds of issues might find that more social capital could be generated.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 304.

For persons who accept neoliberal principles, examples of reasonable justification for exclusion from social groups could include claims regarding efficiency and freedom. Suppose an individual who observes neoliberal principles had applied for membership in a certain group. The group, which also observes neoliberal principles, rejects the application. Inquiring into the rationale for rejection, the applicant might be told that they ‘would have lowered the overall efficiency of the group’. Examples might include sports teams with certain performance standards, or investors’ groups with minimum portfolio values. Or, possibly, the applicant might be rejected for prospectively ‘restricting the freedom of other group members’. Sometimes, new recruits need a great deal of mentorship to perform at the standards of efficiency that established groups expect, but no members of the group are willing to sacrifice their own activities to provide such training. If both the applicant and the group adhered to neoliberal principles, these justifications for exclusion could not possibly be rejected as unreasonable by either party.

The main problem for a neoliberal approach to social capital is perhaps that of a focus on efficiency. While not bad in and of itself, a focus on efficiency may lead to the viewing of social capital in strictly instrumental terms. For example, the commodification of social capital in income-equivalent terms¹²⁰ may lead to the trading of social capital ‘credits’ in a manner not unlike the trading of carbon credits.¹²¹ The danger of this instrumental approach is summed up well by Stuart Hampshire, who described such a ‘habit of mind’ as “abstract cruelty in politics, a dull, destructive political righteousness:

¹²⁰ See Helliwell and Huang, “Well-Being and Trust in the Workplace.” *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp. 747-67. Helliwell and Huang regard trust as a key feature of social networks in which social capital is formed, and quantify trust in income-equivalent terms. A 10 percent increase in perceived trust among employees was found to be preferable to a 30 percent increase in individual take-home pay.

¹²¹ Debra Satz, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010), 92. Satz convincingly argues that such markets are ‘noxious’, and should be disallowed.

mechanical, quantitative thinking [which has led to] more... people destroyed because of enlightened calculations that have proved wrong”.¹²² Valuing social associations only for the ‘capital’ they can contribute to the economy potentially obscures a qualitative dimension, and here the lives of real people may get lost in the balance. These qualitative values may not show up in what has been referred to in another context as the “details of the counting-house”,¹²³ but, as Bourdieu says, they may help to “protect an entire portion of the present social order from falling into anomie”.¹²⁴ As Scheffler points out, “it is pathological to attach nothing but instrumental value to any of one’s personal relationships”,¹²⁵ a result which seems possible when neoliberal principles of efficiency are followed.

Worse, such an instrumental approach may lead to vast social inequalities when combined with unregulated freedom. But neoliberals are not concerned with inequality so long as all enjoy equal rights to liberty; they are concerned with inefficiency. Neoliberals accept that, on occasion, free competition in open markets may result in an allocation of goods which is suboptimal in terms of overall efficiency. They accept that such situations of market failure merit governmental intervention. But the problem is that there exist no clear criteria for determining when market failure has occurred. The neoliberal concern for avoiding the suboptimal allocation of goods runs the risk of being inegalitarian, in that there is no way to take stock of pervasive socioeconomic disadvantage. As Mirowski laments, “neoliberals regard inequality of economic resources and political rights not as

¹²² Stuart Hampshire, *Public and Private Morality* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 4.

¹²³ Richard Henry Tawney, *Equality* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), 154–155.

¹²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Essence of Neoliberalism,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* December (1998), <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>.

¹²⁵ Samuel Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal Thought* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/019257671.001.0001>.

an unfortunate by-product of capitalism, but a necessary functional characteristic of their ideal market system”.¹²⁶ Neoliberals view such inequalities as acceptable because they think that inequality is not only “the natural state of market economies”,¹²⁷ but that it is also “one of its strongest motor forces for progress”.¹²⁸

2.3 – CIVIC REPUBLICANISM

Cohen and Rogers present civic republicanism as the first alternative to neoliberalism.¹²⁹ They define civic republicanism as an anti-pluralist form of democracy where high value is placed on a “deliberative politics of policy formation”,¹³⁰ a process which is intended to ensure that results of deliberation are free from factious influence. In *Associations and Democracy*, this deliberative process is described by Cohen and Rogers as a form of public reason that “proceeds by reference to consideration of the common good and that shapes the preferences of participants by requiring them to offer reasons for their views that provide such reference”.¹³¹ The elimination of faction from this account of deliberative democracy thus hinges on the requirement that reasons be given in relation to a common good. In the case of social capital, these deliberations may become particularly nuanced, because social capital has been shown by research to be both of common advantage, and of advantage to members of a given faction. Yet if civic republicans are

¹²⁶ Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown*, 2013, 63. The book is a very well-researched intellectual history and critique of neoliberalism.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ It is important to note that the account of civic republicanism developed in the work of Cohen and Rogers pre-dates—and differs sharply from—the influential account of civic republicanism observable in the Philip Pettit’s *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, 1997.

¹³⁰ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 22.

¹³¹ Ibid.

able to agree on a way to promote social capital that is consistent with a deliberative conception of the common good, they can then make very strong policies which are able to take a pro-active hand in promoting social capital.

At the time of writing, there are no national-level regimes which promote social capital in a manner that is entirely consistent with the civic republican approach described by Cohen and Rogers.¹³² However, it is worth noting that the kind of thinking described by Cohen and Rogers has been influential at a national level in America since the late 1700s. In particular, since the 1970s, it has become popular in American politics to politically express enthusiasm for what Cohen and Rogers see as the civic republicanism of early American leaders. This enthusiasm is often made apparent in the speeches and writings, and, in more recent years, even the format of American presidential debates has come to make use of the ‘town-hall meeting’ style developed by early colonists. Speakers in these debates often play on public nostalgia for a return to the civic virtues of the ‘founding fathers of America’,¹³³ and a return to the quality of civic engagement enjoyed by the Americans that de Tocqueville famously observed in the 1830s.¹³⁴

In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam writes that nostalgia for these bygone days “is an attempt to recapture a time when public-spiritedness really did carry more value and

¹³² There are a number of local and regional policies which are characteristically civic republican in nature; one example is that of ‘mandatory homeowner’s associations’ in gated communities.

¹³³ Doherty, “Presidential Rhetoric, Candidate Evaluations, and Party Identification.”

¹³⁴ One author writes that the “imagery of the United States as a communitarian society based on the New England town-hall type of participatory democracy has pervaded all dimensions of U.S. culture, from the paintings of Norman Rockwell to calls in the 1990s by Representative Gingrich and President Clinton...the first President Bush...[and] his son, President George W. Bush, as well.” See Vicente Navarro, “A Critique of Social Capital,” *International Journal of Health Services* 32, no. 3 (July 1, 2002): 424.

when communities really did ‘work’ ”.¹³⁵ It is beyond any doubt that Putnam sees his own work as offering his fellow Americans a route of return to the idyllic quality of civic engagement of America’s yesteryears. Putnam offers this return through a revival of social capital.¹³⁶ It is worth noting, too, that Putnam is not only a scholar: his conviction in social capital as a common good has prompted him to engage in political life to such a degree that he can also be said to be an activist. In particular, in the late 1990s, Putnam held a series of “Saguaro Seminars” which drew academics together with the aim to develop strategies for generating more social capital.¹³⁷ The conclusions of the Saguaro seminarians, like those of Putnam, were strongly communitarian, and argued that America needed once more to become a nation of de Tocquevillean ‘joiners’. Notably, these seminars did not suggest any political methods for the re-establishment of civic engagement and generation of social capital, save for the general recommendations that people ought to get out to more community polling meetings, and that campaign financing should be reformed.¹³⁸ Instead, the Saguaro seminarians largely focused on the generation of social capital in schools, the workplace, churches, the arts, the development of public spaces, and by way of internet communications.¹³⁹

In her book *Diverse Communities*, Barbara Arneil argues that the “neo-republican vision of civil society”¹⁴⁰ developed by Putnam and the Saguaro seminarians directly

¹³⁵ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2001, 287.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 402–414.

¹³⁷ These seminars are now a permanent fixture at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

¹³⁸ Halpern, *Social Capital*, 293.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Arneil, *Diverse Communities: The Problem with Social Capital*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7. Arneil’s Putnam is a ‘neo-republican’ who sees social capital and civil society as parts of “a transmission belt for dominant republican values” which are “to be transmitted from the past (the social gospel in the Progressive Era, the shared civic commitment to America of the ‘long civic generation’) via a contemporary reassertion, tinged by nostalgia, of the ‘shared norms’ of the traditional middle class against the divisive forces of the new, postmodern ‘cultural margins’ in American society” (*ibid.* 231).

influenced the social policies of the George W. Bush administration. Arneil begins her argument by pointing out that one of the explicit recommendations of the Saguaro Seminar was to “increase secular funds for faith-based organizations”.¹⁴¹ She then documents how, immediately following the publication of the results of the Saguaro Seminar, Bush signed executive orders which established ‘Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives’ across the United States. The faith-based centers were “in most cases...small-scale congregations”.¹⁴² Arneil holds the connection between Bush’s policies and social capital to be concrete, and, according to an official White House press release, Bush’s ‘faith-based centers’ were to “energize civil society and rebuild social capital”.¹⁴³ Arneil cements Putnam’s civic republicanism to the Bush administration, noting that the first director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was a Saguaro seminarian.¹⁴⁴

Multiple political philosophies will cross-pollinate in actual practice, often “to the extent that it becomes implausible, if not impossible, to describe any particular institution or decision as the pure and unalloyed consequence of a particular political philosophy”.¹⁴⁵ Bush’s executive orders are an excellent example of this: on one hand, they offload the generation of social capital to non-governmental agencies, thus fulfilling a neoliberal commitment to small government. When announcing these initiatives, Bush also claimed that their implementation would uphold the egalitarian “bedrock principles

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴² Ibid., 192.

¹⁴³ The White House, “Faith-Based and Community Organizations.”

¹⁴⁴ Arneil, *Diverse Communities*, 191.

¹⁴⁵ Will Kymlicka, “Liberal Egalitarianism and Civic Republicanism: Friends or Enemies?,” in *Debating Democracy’s Discontent Essays on American Politics, Law, and Public Philosophy*, ed. Anita L. Allen and Milton C. Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 142, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/0198294964.001.0001>.

of pluralism, nondiscrimination, evenhandedness and neutrality”.¹⁴⁶ However, as Arneil has argued, the policy certainly does contain elements, although heavily alloyed, of a civic republican conception of the ‘common good’, and she argues that Bush inherited the identification of social capital as a component of a republican conception of the ‘common good’ from Putnam and his Saguaro seminararians.

One example of a social group exhibiting characteristics of civic republicanism may be that of mandatory homeowners’ associations. These are surprisingly common in the United States: in 2004, for instance, it was found that “260,000 association-governed communities accommodated 51.8 million residents in 20.8 million housing units and that 50 percent of all new homes in major metropolitan areas belonged to a community association”.¹⁴⁷ If these numbers are not striking, what should be more interesting is that associational membership and participation are mandatory in a number of these communities. It could be said that such associations have, upon deliberation, resolved that it is in the interest of the common local good that community meetings be held regularly, and that all persons who own houses within the community do their best to attend. It is not unreasonable to suspect that a few eager hobbyists or sports enthusiasts—factional minorities—may dislike the way that these meetings cut into their free time. Yet the special interests of individuals do not count against the common good of the entire neighborhood itself, where a strong sense of civic responsibility is sometimes deemed necessary to establish trust and security.

¹⁴⁶ Arneil, *Diverse Communities*, 192. Here, Arneil directly quotes a White House press release.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Pacione, “Proprietary Residential Communities in the United States,” *Geographical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 545, doi:10.2307/30034137.

In the case of civic republicanism, exclusion from a social group would likely be a matter of mutually agreeable self-separation. Consider the example of ordering a pizza. Assume we have a group of seven committed civic republicans, each of whom loves pizza, and that this group has decided to go ahead and order one pizza.¹⁴⁸ Deliberation reveals that four persons prefer pepperoni pizza, one individual prefers ‘buffalo chicken’,¹⁴⁹ one is a vegan, and one has celiac disease. The reasons given by the vegan and the person with celiac disease are compelling; the reasons given by the buffalo chicken lover are less so, being the simple expression of a preference for a certain flavor. But in the final analysis, all of these reasons are rejected: the four pepperoni-lovers form a majority, the buffalo chicken faction is convinced to play along with the majority, and a pepperoni pizza is ordered. If each member of the group adheres to civic republican principles, the vegan and the person with celiac disease will accept the verdict, and find something else in the fridge. At any rate, provided that the majority decision is reached deliberatively, with acknowledgment and discussion of objections, the selection of a course of action could not possibly be rejected as unreasonable by either party, although, to carry on the analogy, the result may be inedible for the minority (who perhaps should form their own community to forge and pursue a conception of the common good appropriate for their members).

In some cases, especially where sensitive cultural and religious matters are concerned, self-exclusion from the results of civic republican policies will not be as simple as opting to abstain from an order of pizza. As an example, consider Bush’s policy

¹⁴⁸ For philosophically expeditious purposes, one and only one pizza may be ordered.

¹⁴⁹ Thanks are due to a student, Mark Encinas, for forcefully pressing buffalo chicken as a topping option in a class discussion where the example of ordering a pizza was discussed at some length.

promoting social capital. It is uncharitable to assume that Bush's reasons for adopting these policies involved any calculated disfavour for any cultural groups or individuals. As Arneil has noted elsewhere, it seems that Bush was well-intentioned to a fault.¹⁵⁰ Despite good intentions, however, the real result of Bush's policies is consistent with the undesirable kind of results that civic republicanism invites. The problem, as Arneil points out, is that Bush's policies ended up being discriminatory in effect. In fact, even religious members of the small-scale congregations which received funding from the program found it strange that non-Christian persons might have to come to a church to benefit from a service that was supposedly good for everyone.¹⁵¹ This puts a fine point on the key problem with civic republicanism: by striving to converge upon one common good, civic republicans are unable to politically account for interpersonal difference and diversity with sufficient seriousness. It only makes sense that social capital should be promoted for all citizens if it is to be promoted at all, and not just to those persons who are willing to partake in some of the activities of the majority—in Bush's case, Christians. In seeking to promote social capital with a focus on a common good defined by the majority, civic republican policies stand to overlook the concerns of minorities in the same manner as the Bush policy and are thus ultimately inegalitarian.

2.4 – EGALITARIAN PLURALISM

Cohen and Rogers define egalitarian pluralism as a form of democracy whose adherents focus on ensuring that as many persons as possible are able to participate as equals in

¹⁵⁰ Arneil, *Diverse Communities*, 190.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 192–193.

political processes.¹⁵² In *Associations and Democracy*, Cohen and Rogers emphasise that it is the egalitarian pluralists' decision-making process that makes "egalitarian pluralists *egalitarian*",¹⁵³ and describe outcomes of that process as "legitimate only if [they] emerge from a process of representation and bargaining in which all interests have substantively equal chances of being heard and influencing the outcome".¹⁵⁴ Cohen and Rogers note that this commitment to pluralism makes egalitarian pluralists "skeptical about substantive conceptions of the common good" such as those sought by civic republicans.¹⁵⁵ For egalitarian pluralists, such conceptions are likely to be uninformative and vacuous, or extremely contentious.¹⁵⁶ Instead of focusing on a conception of the common good, then, the egalitarian pluralist instead focuses on processes, and promotes "a political process that reflects the true distribution and weight of social interests".¹⁵⁷

An egalitarian pluralist policy agenda for the improvement of social capital is a likely prospect for distributive fairness. Egalitarian policy-makers who are interested in social capital are also able to plan policy interventions using methods which create and liquidate social capital, but it is their ability to redistribute social capital that is of particular note. As Cohen and Rogers point out, egalitarian pluralists have a conception of distributive fairness that "condemns inequalities of advantage deriving from difference of inherited resources, of natural endowments or of simple good luck".¹⁵⁸ They note that there are a number of ways that distributive fairness might be achieved in a manner that fits the convictions of an egalitarian pluralist, including "Rawls's maximin criterion, or a

¹⁵² Cohen and Rogers, "Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance," 28.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

conception that imposes constraints on the dispersion of resources, or a mixed view combining attention to the minimum and dispersion”.¹⁵⁹

The commitment to the redistribution of social capital means egalitarian pluralists are able to remedy inequality. Durlauf holds that “social capital may be inequality enhancing”, and as such, suggests that “any policy maker whose objectives include egalitarian considerations will therefore be forced to reject any necessary equivalence between an increase in social capital and better social outcomes”.¹⁶⁰ Durlauf proposes that ‘associational redistribution’¹⁶¹ is a more reliable way to generate better social outcomes when intervening in social capital, and defines it as follows:

associational redistribution refers to the idea that the government can in principle take steps to alter the composition of various public associations in order to redistribute the effects of group memberships. There is nothing new about associational redistribution as a government policy. Affirmative action may be thought of as a set of policies that alter memberships in the student bodies of schools or the workplaces of firms. School busing to achieve racial integration was an earlier policy of this type.¹⁶²

An example of a social capital policy which would be consistent with the idea of associational redistribution could involve the modification of employment equity standards to include affirmative action controls for inequalities in social capital. For instance, hiring committees could afford preference to persons from low social capital networks over an equally meritorious candidate from a network with higher social capital. Because jobs expand social networks, they are a good avenue for the reallocation of social capital, and work towards satisfying the goal articulated in §1.4 by increasing

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 95.

¹⁶⁰ Steven Durlauf, “Membership and Inequality,” in *The Handbook of Social Capital*, ed. Dario Castiglione, Jan W. van Deth, and Guglielmo Wolleb (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 595.

¹⁶¹ Durlauf, “Associational Redistribution.”

¹⁶² Durlauf, “Membership and Inequality,” 608.

social capital without increasing inequalities. This example is especially relevant with regard to hiring practices in public-sector organizations.

It is a well-documented fact that many jobs are obtained not by publicly posted advertisements for positions that are “open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity”,¹⁶³ but rather by word-of-mouth.¹⁶⁴ In organizations where word-of-mouth hiring is practiced, Charles Tilly suggests that the easiest way to “foil...inequality-producing effects or to turn them toward the promotion of equality” might simply be changing which referral networks communicate about jobs:

If existing employees of a firm continue to play predominant parts in the recruitment of applicants for new jobs, altering the networks through which information about new openings flows is likely to have a larger effect at a lower cost than enforcing strictly egalitarian standards in hiring decisions.¹⁶⁵

Tilly astutely points out that these illegal hiring¹⁶⁶ behaviours that keep jobs within certain word-of-mouth circles can easily be directed in a more egalitarian fashion.

Earlier it was noted that it is the decision-making process which makes egalitarian pluralism egalitarian. The key characteristic of that decision-making process, or the ‘egalitarian core’ of it, is the idea that all persons involved “have substantively equal chances of being heard and influencing the outcome”.¹⁶⁷ Given this core characteristic, one example of a group which could be said to adhere to egalitarian principles could be that of an open-source, not-for-profit software engineering group. Such groups are not perfectly egalitarian, as they presume some foreknowledge of computer technology, and

¹⁶³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 72.

¹⁶⁴ Mark S. Granovetter, *Getting a Job : a Study of Contacts and Careers* (Harvard University Press, 1974).

¹⁶⁵ Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, 245.

¹⁶⁶ “An employer’s reliance on word-of-mouth recruitment by its mostly Hispanic work force may violate the law if the result is that almost all new hires are Hispanic”. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Prohibited Practices,” <http://www1.eeoc.gov/laws/practices/index.cfm?renderforprint=1>.

¹⁶⁷ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 28.

therefore exclude billions of potential group members in first-world nations who do not have access to computers. However, such exclusion is not intentional; it is circumstantial: open-source projects such as LINUX and Wikipedia¹⁶⁸ boasted contributors from many geographical regions and many income brackets. Provided that people have a desire to work on a given open-source project, they are free to join, and work alongside the other participants. Cohen and Rogers describe the decision-making processes of a political egalitarian pluralist group, and a similar egalitarian decision-making process could be implemented at the group level with regard to differing conceptions of potential directions for a piece of software: after every concern has been voiced, the team can try to determine how to incorporate the ideas and suggestions of everyone involved.

Reasonable justifications for being excluded from an egalitarian social group are a little more difficult to determine. The core egalitarian characteristic of ensuring that all persons “have substantively equal chances of being heard and influencing the outcome”¹⁶⁹ applies, in the first instance, to political decision making processes, and not to social groups. However, the relational egalitarian approach developed by Anderson has encapsulated some basic ground rules of characteristically egalitarian group dynamics that are consistent with Cohen and Rogers’s description of egalitarian pluralism.

Anderson writes that in such a group, everyone is

...entitled to participate, that others recognize an obligation to listen respectfully and respond to one’s arguments, [and] that no one need bow and scrape before others or represent themselves as inferior to others as a condition of having their claim heard.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 65–66, 70–74.

¹⁶⁹ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 28.

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth S. Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?,” *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (January 1, 1999): 313.

Taking these statements as guidelines, the reasons for being excluded from an egalitarian group can be derived simply. Anderson gives the following criteria for ejection, as she considers an expected objection to the seemingly permissive attitudes of egalitarians:

[must we] always listen patiently to those who have proven themselves to be stupid, cranky, or dishonest? No. It means (1) that everyone must be granted the initial benefit of the doubt, (2) a person can be ignored or excluded from discussion only on demonstrated grounds of communicative incompetence or unwillingness to engage in fair discussion, and (3) reasonable opportunities must be available to the excluded to demonstrate their communicative competence and thereby win back a place in the conversation.¹⁷¹

Exclusion from an egalitarian group on the grounds described above by Anderson could not possibly be rejected as unreasonable by those observing egalitarian principles. It may be the case that persons who are communicatively incompetent or unwilling to engage in fair discussion due to emotional reasons may regard their exclusion from a group as unreasonable. But as Anderson suggests, social groups modeled on egalitarian principles would make the provision that, after such persons have come to their senses, and are again willing to participate with equal concern and respect for others, their contributions and social interests will once again be welcome at the 'table'.

Egalitarian pluralism offers the policy-maker a number of avenues for intervening in social capital. Furthermore, these policy interventions can be enacted in ways which (a) respect individual freedom, and (b) avoid the exacerbation of inequalities of social capital. The egalitarian pluralists' concern for establishing a fair decision-making process is admirable. But when it comes to looking at social capital, egalitarian pluralisms' focus on institutional processes fails to take matters of social engagement and civic-mindedness sufficiently seriously. No matter how impressive a process might be at aggregating inputs

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

into a politically acceptable output, participants themselves are relied upon to contribute certain inputs to that process. The nature and quality of these inputs matter: it does little good to have an egalitarian pluralist decision-making process if many participants are radically inegalitarian. In order to ensure that the bargaining conditions remain egalitarian in character, egalitarian social conditions must also, to some extent, exist in the society in question. Cohen and Rogers forward this very same criticism of egalitarian pluralism—albeit not with specific reference to social capital—when they observe that “politics is more than process”.¹⁷² It is thus a shortcoming of egalitarian pluralism that the social and civic *fora* where social capital is commonly generated are not more specifically addressed as being of serious concern. Relational egalitarianism presents one way to address this shortcoming, and will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

2.5 - DISCUSSION

The preceding ideologies offer different strengths and limitations for policy makers who wish to promote social capital. The civic republican and egalitarian pluralist approaches offer policy makers a full range of interventions, including the direct and indirect creation, liquidation, and redistribution of social capital. A neoliberal approach is more limited, in that it only supports the pursuit of (a) direct interventions which liquidate social capital when doing so is justified by increasing the freedom of other persons, or (b) the indirect creation of social capital by ensuring that people are as unfettered as possible

¹⁷² Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 31.

in their activities. For the policy-maker who desires the fullest possible range of interventions in achieving beneficial social capital outcomes, neoliberalism is restrictive.

The unacceptability of neoliberal and civic republican approaches to the balancing of equality and freedom further reduces the number of viable theoretical bases for policy-makers. In considering the three propositions presented in §1.4, neoliberals hold the second claim—that people should be free to associate as they choose—as primary. The first claim—that governments ought to treat all of their citizens with equal concern and respect—is formally understood by neoliberals in terms of equal rights and liberties, rather than equal material and social advantage. And, as seen, the third claim—that social networks have sufficient value as a public good to be promoted politically—was a claim that could only be pursued indirectly by those who supported and existed in a neoliberal system. The possibility of generating more inequality by promoting social capital did not, at least on a theoretical level, perturb the neoliberal conscience, which was likely to see such inequalities as further motivation for competition. In balancing the tension generated by the three propositions being discussed, it is possible to decisively conclude that neoliberalism veers too close to freedom, and too far from equality.

In this regard, civic republicanism fares better than neoliberalism, because it demands that citizens and legislators accord respect for one another as equal deliberators. But this mutual respect need only last until deliberation ends. After a majority is established, civic republican policies can result in the promotion of social capital in a manner that is not beneficial—or even accessible—to minorities. As a result, majoritarian systems such as civic republicanism stand to rule out the qualitative differences of minority groups as politically meaningless. What is important is that this approach stands

to overlook crucial differences, including fundamental identity-forming and cultural matters such as religion. In a civic republican system, social capital policies can be selected and promoted by the majority. But this may see the social capital of minority groups—which often begins at a lower level than that of a majority—become even further devalued relative to the promoted social capital of the majority. In this way, civic republicanism seems to compromise both the freedom and equality of minorities.

Egalitarian pluralism cannot guarantee that the qualitative differences of individuals or groups will be politically promoted, but it does preserve the meaningfulness of those differences as politically valid. Illustrating this point is made easier by revisiting the pizza example discussed at some length in §2.3. Where civic republicans would require that, after democratic deliberation, the four pepperoni lovers order the pizza by ‘majority rule’, egalitarian pluralists instead require that all parties—the pepperoni and buffalo chicken lovers, the vegan, and person with celiac disease—work out their differences together, and build these differences, in some sense, into the final result. An example of a result of such egalitarian pluralist discussions is a ‘complete-your-own’ pizza arrangement: although nobody but the four pepperoni lovers could agree on toppings, everybody could agree on a gluten-free crust and tomato paste. Having established the basic pizza structure, everyone would then be free to pursue their own conception of good toppings: the vegan might use spinach and arugula, the person with celiac disease might use onions and pineapple, and the buffalo chicken lover would be free to pursue their own preference. The result, inasmuch as is possible with the making of a pizza, shows equal concern and respect for all: when faced with a disagreement, nobody had to entirely give up on pizza, or resort to rummaging through

the fridge. True, such equality was achieved at the expense of the freedom to order the exact pizza that one might have desired, at least without putting more work into it by selecting and applying one's own toppings. Thus, while egalitarian pluralism can't guarantee that the qualitatively unique aspects of groups are optimally facilitated by the political structure, it can guarantee that those differences are not simply ignored (neoliberalism) or ruled out after deliberation by a majority (civic republicanism).

In terms of offering both a full selection of policy interventions (creation, liquidation, redistribution) and avoiding the exacerbation of inequalities, egalitarian pluralism emerges as the best-rounded option, surpassing civic republicanism, and handily beating neoliberal constitutionalism. When it comes to social capital, however, egalitarian pluralism is the most underdeveloped theory among the three alternatives presented here. In particular, Cohen and Rogers observe that "neoliberal constitutionalism is perhaps the most influential contemporary approach...and the one most ascendant in recent discussions".¹⁷³ Another writer laments that "neoliberal discourse [has become] not just one discourse among many; it has become a 'master discourse'...to which all developments in the policy sphere must adhere. It effectively silences all other voices".¹⁷⁴

For his part, Putnam has been criticized for having a traditional approach to values in his quest to promote social capital.¹⁷⁵ Yet, despite his civic republican approach and traditional values, his efforts have been influential. It seems fair to say, in fact, that

¹⁷³ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁴ Patrick Fitzsimmons, "Neo-liberalism and 'Social Capital': Reinventing Community" (presented at the Neo-liberalism, Welfare and Education: "The New Zealand Experiment": Critique and Critical Transformations Conference, New Orleans, 2000), 14.

¹⁷⁵ Arneil, *Diverse Communities*, 231.

Putnam stands alone as the only prominent figure who has presented a serious alternative to the neoliberal approach to social capital. Traditional though they may be, Putnam's values seem laudable in the face of the instrumental 'values' of neoliberalism.

Perhaps Putnam is to be applauded for his lonely stand against the advance of neoliberalism. But why is there is no 'egalitarian Putnam'? Surely social capital is of relevance to egalitarians. For instance, consider R.H. Tawney, who long ago wrote that it is important to try to distribute wealth equally, "not [because] wealth is the most important of man's treasures, but to prove that it is not".¹⁷⁶ The many benefits of social capital described in §1.3 help to show that social capital may be precisely the kind of non-financial 'treasure' that Tawney had in mind. Indeed, social capital should be regarded as being potentially important for egalitarians in that it can help to articulate the ways in which persons are socially, and not just financially, unequal, thereby presenting a more accurate picture of real advantage and disadvantage.

In recent years, egalitarian political thought has focused deeply on both the redistribution of wealth, and political decision-making processes. But focusing on the redistribution of wealth may obscure the importance of the social dimensions of life, as hinted at above by Tawney. And, as Cohen and Rogers observed, this recent egalitarian focus on political processes—perhaps largely due to the influential work of Rawls—has come at the expense of sufficient attention being paid to social affairs. The lack of an 'egalitarian Putnam' may thus be due to the heavy emphasis that both redistribution and political processes have received. The next chapter applies relational egalitarianism to social capital in an attempt to compensate for this lack of focus.

¹⁷⁶ Tawney, *Equality*, 291.

CHAPTER 3: AN EGALITARIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL CAPITAL

3.1 - SOCIAL CAPITAL, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EGALITARIANISM

This chapter proposes an egalitarian strategy for the promotion of social capital. This venture begins with the identification of relational egalitarianism as a social supplement to the political approach of egalitarian pluralism discussed in the previous chapter. There are a number of ways in which egalitarians, generally speaking, might pursue social justice in the matter of social capital. Relational egalitarianism is but one option from among these possibilities. However, it will be argued that relational egalitarianism is particularly helpful in this regard, in that it makes it easy for people to distinguish between equal and unequal forms of social capital. After introducing relational egalitarianism in the second section of this chapter, the third section tries to describe what a relational egalitarian approach would require of individuals on a person-by-person basis—that is, what a relational egalitarian social ethos would look like—with specific reference to social capital. This chapter then considers the kind of political support that would be required in order to achieve and maintain such a social ethos. In section four, it is argued that governments will need to (a) eliminate poverty, and (b) develop educational curricula which address the importance of social capital. This will bring the reader to the end of the thesis, which, as a whole, is briefly reviewed and summarized in the fifth and concluding section.

In the previous chapter, the account of egalitarian pluralism presented by Cohen and Rogers was identified as a promising way to find a political balance for competing

claims of equality and freedom while simultaneously pursuing the goal of promoting social capital. The main strength—and key characteristic—of egalitarian pluralism was its political decision-making process, which stressed that political decisions were “legitimate only if...all interests have substantively equal chances of being heard and influencing the outcome”.¹⁷⁷ This decision-making process was admirable, but, as demonstrated in §2.4, not without fault. The central problem was that the political egalitarian pluralist approach was too little concerned with the quality of social and civic life. For all its structural superiority, it was seen that the political egalitarian decision-making process could fail to produce characteristically egalitarian results if the participants themselves are socially unequal.

A Rawlsian system could be one example of an egalitarian approach which moves away from the strictly political and procedural levels, and focuses on promoting social capital at the level of social justice. It seems that advocates of a Rawlsian system would see the value in social capital, and might view social capital as something like a primary, or all-purpose, good. Rawls defines primary goods as “things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants”.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, well-being, health, productivity, and access to opportunities—some of the many benefits associated with social capital, and listed in §1.3—are things which allow persons of diverse communities to better pursue their own comprehensive conceptions of the good, and are, “regardless of what an individual’s rational plans are in detail...things he would prefer more of rather than less”.¹⁷⁹ Even if social capital can’t be defined as a primary good, it certainly seems to fit

¹⁷⁷ Cohen and Rogers, “Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance,” 28.

¹⁷⁸ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 79.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Rawls's requirement that "a *partial* similarity of citizens' conceptions of the good is sufficient for political and social justice".¹⁸⁰ Because the goods of social capital are, by the standard of an overlapping consensus, considered to be desirable by so many persons of different religions, classes, political persuasions, and regions, it seems fair to consider social capital as something that at least approaches the level of a primary good in the sense defined by Rawls.

Rawlsians should take an interest in developing an egalitarian approach to social capital because they are, first and foremost, committed to the importance of the idea that citizens ought to be free and equal persons who are engaged in social cooperation.¹⁸¹ For a Rawlsian, social capital would be one way to assess how well a given group of citizen lives up to that standard. Moreover, new research in social capital would likely be welcomed by Rawlsians as a way of more accurately indicating the true measure of advantage and disadvantage in a given population. On these grounds, it seems possible that an egalitarian of a Rawlsian sort might advocate for the redistribution of social capital in accordance with Rawls's difference principle. Because the "maximin"¹⁸² Rawlsian system specifically looks to improve the aforementioned lowest point of reference, the Rawlsian approach would allow for inequalities in distributions of social capital to be arranged for "the greatest benefit of the least advantaged".¹⁸³ Although social capital has been directly linked with access to opportunities, such a mode of distribution could remain consistent with Rawlsian theory (and with egalitarianism more generally) by ensuring that any inequalities of opportunity resulting from redistributions

¹⁸⁰ John Rawls, *Collected Papers*, New edition (Harvard University Press, 2001), 361. Rawls's emphasis.

¹⁸¹ John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (Summer 1985): 229.

¹⁸² Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 153.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 266.

of social capital were arranged in such a manner as to “enhance the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity”.¹⁸⁴ A good illustration of one way in which a Rawlsian redistribution of social capital might work in the sense described here involves the modification of employment equity standards to include affirmative action controls for inequalities in social capital. As discussed in §2.4, A hiring committee could afford some measure of preference to a person from a low social capital network over a similarly qualified person from a network structure with higher social capital. Because jobs expand social networks, they are a good avenue for the reallocation of social capital, thus satisfying the goal of increasing social capital without increasing inequalities. This example seems especially relevant with regards to hiring practices in governmental branches, public-sector companies, universities, and schools.

Governmental redistribution of goods and the establishment of employment equity standards are certainly ways in which social capital might be promoted in an egalitarian fashion. However, egalitarians who seek to promote social capital must recognize that the social and associational nature of social capital entails that the goal of promoting social capital can only be achieved in part by political institutions. To truly achieve and maintain a society with more social capital is a matter which invariably requires some degree of citizen participation. In her observations about segregation in America, Anderson tries to draw attention to the importance of citizen involvement. She notes that although American lawmakers made the decision to politically outlaw segregation, *de jure*, in 1964, it is nonetheless the case that *de facto* social segregation remains rampant today, especially in cities like Baltimore and Detroit, which are more

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

deeply segregated today than when the Civil Rights Act was created. For Anderson, such facts demonstrate that it is important not simply to set idealistic goals and pursue them from a top-down, political approach. The problem is that the social ills in need of redress may themselves lurk in social jurisdictions that do not feel the impact of law. She concludes, then, that although the Civil Rights Act was a legal victory for egalitarians, the “promise of political equality is a sham without social equality in the institutions of civil society”.¹⁸⁵ To fully achieve the egalitarian goal of better social capital for all, it seems that members of society at large must also play a role. What is really required in such cases, then, is not a top-down imposition of law, but a bottom-up change of behaviour. How, then, can governments help citizens to participate in building social capital in an equitable and free way?

3.2 – SOCIAL CAPITAL AND RELATIONAL EGALITARIANISM

Help in answering this question can be found in relational egalitarianism, as developed by Anderson, J. Cohen, and Scheffler. As an approach to social justice, relational egalitarianism is related to political egalitarianism, in that it takes an equal capacity for human participation as being of high importance. However, where political egalitarian pluralism sought equal participation in political decision-making processes, relational egalitarianism focuses on equality in interpersonal relations. To illustrate the consistency of this theoretical similarity across different venues of human activity, consider Scheffler, who describes relational egalitarianism as

¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth S. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 93.

...a moral ideal governing the relations in which people stand to one another. Instead of focusing attention on the differing contingencies of each person's traits, abilities, and other circumstances, this ideal abstracts from the undeniable differences among people. It claims that human relations must be conducted on the basis of an assumption that everyone's life is equally important, and that all members of a society have equal standing.¹⁸⁶

In the above passage, the absence of talk about political decision-making processes is conspicuous, and Scheffler's emphasis on equality in social relations is clear. But observe that Scheffler's description of relational egalitarianism is theoretically consistent with Cohen and Rogers's account of egalitarian pluralism, where the decisively 'egalitarian' element in egalitarian political decision-making processes was identified as the idea that political decision-making processes are "legitimate only if...all interests have substantively equal chances of being heard and influencing the outcome".¹⁸⁷ In the above passage, Scheffler maintains that same key egalitarian element, and supports the idea of according equal standing to all participants. Scheffler's statement offers a social extension, then, of the political egalitarianism described by Cohen and Rogers.

It is natural to ask what sort of social behavior might be entailed by upholding relational egalitarianism. Perfect relational equality in each and every possible dimension of human endeavor seems potentially onerous. Anderson expresses this, and—rhetorically—asks if relational egalitarianism requires that "we always listen patiently to those who have proven themselves to be stupid, cranky, or dishonest".¹⁸⁸ But as Scheffler makes clear in the quotation presented above, the kind of equality sought by relational egalitarians is not absolute: the relational egalitarian's concern for social equality is not based "on the differing contingencies of each person's traits, abilities, and other

¹⁸⁶ Samuel Scheffler, "What Is Egalitarianism?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2003): 21–22.

¹⁸⁷ Cohen and Rogers, "Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance," 28.

¹⁸⁸ Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?," 313.

circumstances”, but on the concern that people ought to view one another’s lives as being of equal importance.¹⁸⁹

Scheffler’s distinction between acceptable and unacceptable forms of relational inequality shows its usefulness in the case of social capital. It seems safe to conjecture that, for relational egalitarians, social capital that accumulates from relations of social equality is to be preferred to social capital that accumulates from relations of social inequality. This conjecture seems consistent with relational egalitarianism: consider that, in the case of social capital that accumulates from acceptable relations of social equality, people can be said to have built their relationships in a way where equal respect for the intrinsic worth of others, as per the relational egalitarianism of both Scheffler and Anderson, is always recognized. In the second case, where social capital accumulates from relations of social inequality, people can be said to have built social capital in a way where equal respect for a persons’ intrinsic worth was disregarded, or, as Scheffler suggests,¹⁹⁰ conflated with valuations of persons’ traits, abilities, and circumstances.

It is not always possible, however, to discern when social capital is, or is not, based on interpersonal relations where the intrinsic worth of others is given equal respect. In particularly egregious cases, a lack of equal respect for the worth of others will be obvious: as Anderson points out, some “inegalitarian ideologies [such as] racism, sexism, nationalism, caste, and eugenics” clearly assert “the justice or necessity of basing social order on a hierarchy of human beings, ranked according to intrinsic worth”.¹⁹¹ These situations are not so hard to identify as falling short of the stated ideal. Yet in other

¹⁸⁹ Scheffler, “What Is Egalitarianism?,” 21–22.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?,” 312.

situations, a lack of equal respect for the intrinsic worth of human beings may be very difficult to identify. It is, in many ways, possible for persons to blur the lines between the (a) acceptable recognition of inequalities based on differing abilities, traits, circumstances, or skills, with (b), the unacceptable ascription of inequality based on unjustifiable assessments of differing intrinsic human worth, such as skin color, socioeconomic standing, sexuality, gender, or disability.

To better determine whether or not equal respect is actually present, relational egalitarians such as Anderson examine the quality of interpersonal claims that people can make of one another in social situations. Here, Anderson's work draws on the writings of Stephen Darwall, who argues that persons are always morally better off when they are able "to make claims and demands of one another as equal free and rational agents".¹⁹² Darwall thinks that persons are morally better off in such circumstances because the kinds of claims and demands that they might wish to make of one another are frequently moral in nature. Darwall's point about freedom in the making of such claims and demands is relational, and has been employed by Anderson in a relational egalitarian account of social justice. She writes that

...justice as an evaluation applied to states of affairs is entirely derivative of justice as an appraisal of the conduct of agents. Where all agents conduct themselves justly—where they successfully comply with all reasonable demands—the state of affairs resulting from their conduct is just. There is no other route to defining a just state of affairs except through the concept of agents' compliance with reasonable claims people may make on each other.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Stephen Darwall, "Respect and the Second-Person Standpoint," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 78, no. 2 (November 1, 2004): 43, doi:10.2307/3219724.

¹⁹³ Elizabeth S. Anderson, "The Fundamental Disagreement Between Luck Egalitarians and Relational Egalitarians," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40, no. sup. 1 (2010): 5, doi:10.1080/00455091.2010.10717652.

There are three important points here. First, when persons are equally respected by all participants in a given situation, persons should feel unfettered in making reasonable claims and demands of one another. Second, if this respect for equal worth is genuine, agents will actually comply with the reasonable claims and demands that are made of them. Third, if respect is equally given on all sides, both the making of claims and compliance with those claims will be dependent on reasonableness: if and when a claim turns out to be unreasonable, or when compliance with a claim would be unreasonable, an agent need not feel obliged, if he or she is truly being treated as an equal, to comply.

A relational egalitarian distinction between socially just and unjust acts applies directly to an analysis of different accumulations of social capital. The importance of the ability to freely make reasonable claims on others (and to reject unreasonable demands made by others) can be illustrated by considering the fact that social capital can accumulate in relational situations where one agent is able to make certain claims and demands that another agent would not be entitled to make. A good example here is that of a criminal organization, where hierarchical structures may allow superiors to unjustifiably (on relational egalitarian grounds) reject the claims and demands of subordinates without consideration, or to require that subordinates be unable to make—or punished for making—such claims. Social capital can still be said to exist and accumulate in such a situation, because the sort of relational inequality described does not obviate the possibility of the subordinate somehow calling upon the social resources of the superior, or of the organization, more generally. Social capital can thus be generated and sustained in inegalitarian social relations, and this sort of social capital can be called unequal social

capital. In contrast, social capital which is generated and sustained in egalitarian social relations can be called equal social capital.

Equal forms of social capital are to be preferred to unequal forms of social capital, *ceteris paribus*, for the reason that equal social capital is a surer bet when it comes to making a greater overall contribution to a characteristically egalitarian brand of social stability. There are exceptions to this guideline, because some inequalities of social capital which fall short of the equal ideal can be beneficial to those who are less (or least) well-off, and can thereby be of collective benefit to society.¹⁹⁴ But in other cases, relations of social inequality pose a serious risk to the overall social health of an egalitarian society. Consider, for the purposes of illustration, that the social capital generated in criminal organizations can result in negative externalities. For example, a gang member may be personally willing to tolerate unequal treatment from other gang members and superiors in order to access certain benefits which come from membership in the criminal organization. Here, the problem is that social capital is not solely a private good: it is also, in at least a 'local' sense, a public good: the criminal's willingness to engage in unequal social relations does not come without spillover effects which result in a cost to the well-being of others. In particular, it is a problem that the unequal social relations of persons, such as those in criminal organizations, may be observed by others as behaviour to be emulated.¹⁹⁵

The ability to distinguish between equal and unequal forms of social capital constitutes a step forward from the political focus of egalitarian pluralism, in that it

¹⁹⁴ Common examples here include social capital built in workplaces and fraternal organizations.

¹⁹⁵ Another similarly heinous example is when the unequal treatment of women is observed, and emulated.

permits egalitarians to decisively express a preference for one sort of social relation over another. This is significant, because when it comes to the building of social capital in the civic spaces of society, and particularly in associational life, this distinction between equal and unequal forms of social capital should guide egalitarian political decisions to fund more equal forms (and to liquidate especially unequal forms) of social capital. As seen, unequal forms of social capital are not to be preferred, because the negative externalities that may arise from inegalitarian behaviour come at a cost to egalitarian society at large. In contrast, relations of social equality are a much more reliable bet when it comes to creating the positive externalities described in §1.3. In the absence of overt inequality, equal and unequal forms of social capital can be distinguished by the degree of freedom persons have in making claims of others, and others' compliance with those claims. The proper approach for a relational egalitarian, then, is to try to influence the behavior of all persons in such a way that maximizes the number of those relations of equal standing, where persons are free to make reasonable claims and demands of one another, and free to not respond to claims and demands that are unreasonable. One way to achieve this goal is to cultivate a relational egalitarian ethos for social capital, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 – A RELATIONAL EGALITARIAN ETHOS FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL

The previous section identified the essentials of relational egalitarianism, and considered a relational egalitarian approach to social capital. The next step is to try to further develop this approach by pursuing a clearer picture of relational egalitarian behaviours which

promote equal social capital. One way to achieve this goal is to identify a relational egalitarian ‘ethos’ for social capital. The idea of an egalitarian ethos was first identified by G.A. Cohen, who made clear that the achievement of an egalitarian society would need more than a victory from an egalitarian political party; rather, it would also require average citizens to behave in egalitarian ways. G. A. Cohen’s thrust here distinguishes, on one hand, between social states of affairs that can be achieved by the concerted actions of political institutions, and social states of affairs that must be brought about by citizens themselves on the other.¹⁹⁶

Defining and describing a social ethos can give form to the kinds of behaviour that would achieve these social ends. An ethos, specifically defined, is “a set of underlying values, which may be explicit or implicit, interpreted as a set of maxims, slogans, or principles, which are then applied in practice”.¹⁹⁷ When it comes to extrapolating an ethos from a series of principles, Michael Titelbaum’s project of deriving an ethos based on a Rawlsian theory of justice suggests a useful starting-point: Titelbaum recommends that, where and when possible, aspiring ethologists ought to model the formal features of an ethos upon the formal features of a given theory which is under examination.¹⁹⁸ Because observation of very basic principles may result in complicated and contextually unpredictable behaviour, Titelbaum’s directive is deceptively simple. In truth, the full development of a relational egalitarian ethos for social capital is likely a more detailed project than can be fully described in a thesis of

¹⁹⁶ G. A. Cohen, *On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice, and Other Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. Michael Otsuka (Princeton University Press, 2011), 227.

¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Wolff, “Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 1998): 105, doi:10.2307/2672834.

¹⁹⁸ Michael G. Titelbaum, “What Would a Rawlsian Ethos of Justice Look Like?,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 36, no. 3 (2008): 303, doi:10.1111/j.1088-4963.2008.00140.x.

this length. Yet the fundamental commitments of a relational egalitarian ethos for social capital are quite basic.

At core, a relational egalitarian ethos for social capital will seek to combine the theoretical principles of relational egalitarianism with recognition of the great value of social capital. To review the theoretical principles underlying relational egalitarianism covered in the previous section, recall that Scheffler described the key claim of relational egalitarianism as the idea that “human relations must be conducted on the basis of an assumption that everyone’s life is equally important, and that all members of a society have equal standing”,¹⁹⁹ Anderson held roughly the same view, and asserted that it was important for persons to create societies “in which people stand in relations of equality to others”,²⁰⁰ and that persons ought to avoid “basing social order on a hierarchy of human beings, ranked according to intrinsic worth”.²⁰¹ Relational egalitarians who affirm these principles can build upon them to incorporate the importance of social capital in three key ways. First, they can take pains to ensure that they do not unjustly exclude any persons from associational activity. To use the terminology of ‘affiliation’ developed by Sen and Nussbaum,²⁰² this would mean that relational egalitarians would strive to ensure that all persons who were willing to participate in social affiliation were in fact also able to do so, and that these persons would not be denied the exercise of this capability by unjust features of the social order around them. Second, in facilitating affiliation, relational egalitarians can attempt to generate equal social capital, and attempt to avoid supporting or contributing to unequal social capital. In doing so, they can employ the criteria of

¹⁹⁹ Scheffler, “What Is Egalitarianism?,” 21–22.

²⁰⁰ Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?,” 289.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁰² Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 79.

judging how free persons are to make reasonable claims, and of whether or not those claims are complied with. Finally, they will maintain fairness and respect, and forcibly exclude persons from social activity only when these fundamental commitments to fairness and respect are not observed by participants. Each of these directives is consistent with the formal features of relational egalitarianism described earlier, and is derived from the work of Anderson and Scheffler.

For relational egalitarians who wish to promote equal social capital, one of the most important things to remember in actual practice is the caution to continually be prepared to acknowledge “the historical reality of exclusion”²⁰³ that has been experienced by disadvantaged persons. Here, relational egalitarians can utilize data about inequalities of social capital to become more aware about the probable *loci* of unjust social exclusion. This is essential, as it seems that relational egalitarians would certainly want to take a critical stance on existing inequalities in distributions of social capital. From the work of Anderson and Scheffler reviewed earlier in this chapter, it is clear that relational egalitarians would not regard inequalities of accumulated social capital as unjust, in and of themselves. However, it seems that relational egalitarians would be interested to see if conspicuous inequalities of social capital were the result of unjust inegalitarian social relations.

As an example, according to the Canadian Human Rights Commission,²⁰⁴ persons who suffer disproportionately from social isolation²⁰⁵ include women,²⁰⁶ persons with

²⁰³ Arneil, *Diverse Communities*, 211.

²⁰⁴ Canadian Human Rights Commission, “About Employment Equity,” August 27, 2009, http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/publications/ee_fa_q_ee-eng.aspx. Also, more generally, see Arneil (2006).

²⁰⁵ Here social isolation is used as a rough proxy for lower, rather than higher, social capital.

disabilities,²⁰⁷ aboriginal persons,²⁰⁸ and persons of visible minorities.²⁰⁹ Relational egalitarians would recognize that persons in these disadvantaged groups have been shown to experience sustained and systematic exclusion from more dominant social networks, such as those of white, educated, property-owning males of European descent.²¹⁰ Where other persons, particularly members of dominant social groups, might suggest that disadvantaged persons on the low end of the inequality spectrum are merely lazy members of special interest groups looking for handouts, or persons who, as Barack Obama noted, in another context, are often directed to “pull [themselves] up by [their] own bootstraps”,²¹¹ relational egalitarians would instead maintain awareness that those persons were not merely isolated individuals suffering from random troubles, but groups of persons whose disadvantage constituted a widespread public issue resulting from genuine social injustice.²¹² It would seem unreasonable to the relational egalitarian to suggest that such extensive social exclusion would, in each case, boil down to individual self-segregation, self-exclusion, or laziness. The relational egalitarian citizen would instead recognize that persons are sometimes so disadvantaged²¹³ that they are unable to

²⁰⁶ Celia Muñoz-Goy, “Social Capital in Spain: Are There Gender Inequalities?,” *European Journal of Government and Economics* 2, no. 1 (June 29, 2013): 79–94.

²⁰⁷ Mary J. De Silva et al., “Social Capital and Mental Illness: A Systematic Review,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (1979-) 59, no. 8 (August 1, 2005): 619–627, doi:10.2307/25570796.

²⁰⁸ Carolyn Schwarz, “Christianity, Identity, Power, and Employment in an Aboriginal Settlement,” *Ethnology* 45, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 71–86, doi:10.2307/4617565.

²⁰⁹ Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 33–34.

²¹⁰ Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549, doi:10.2307/2938735.

²¹¹ “Barack Obama’s Acceptance Speech,” *The New York Times*, August 28, 2008, sec. U.S. / Politics, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/us/politics/28text-obama.html>.

²¹² C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 8–9.

²¹³ Anandi Mani et al., “Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function,” *Science* 341, no. 6149 (August 30, 2013): 976–980, doi:10.1126/science.1238041.

escape their deplorable circumstances on their own.²¹⁴ For the relational egalitarian, the systematic and sustained nature of those experiences of exclusion which persist across space and time exceed those which might be chalked up to chance or merit, and strongly point to social injustices. To use the terminology of Anderson and Darwall introduced earlier, these vast inequalities would suggest that either the reasonable claims of disadvantaged persons were continually disregarded, or that disadvantaged persons were unaware that they could reasonably make the kind of claims, which, when complied with by others, could help to ameliorate the deplorable circumstances they face.

As seen in the earlier-quoted passage from Gutmann, respecting the freedom of association means that social inclusion can't be mandatory or guaranteed. To build social capital, it seems intuitively reasonable that persons will want to associate with like-minded individuals, or with those persons who share similar values and concerns. And, as long as persons do this, it is intuitively plausible that they will come to care about these like-minded persons more than outsiders. This shows why it is important to have an ethos of building social capital in a way that is more, rather than less, equal. In order to achieve social capital of the more equal sort, sound reasons must be given when persons are excluded from social-capital building group activities. The relational egalitarian requires that good reasons be provided, as Scheffler says, when "one's positive duties to one's associates . . . take precedence over one's positive duties to others".²¹⁵ And, as seen, relational egalitarians such as Anderson hold that "where all agents conduct themselves

²¹⁴ This cannot be over-emphasized: in certain areas, one can find persons who have, for compelling reasons, never "left their own neighborhoods", a limitation which hinders the development of social networks. See Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 33.

²¹⁵ Samuel Scheffler, "Families, Nations and Strangers" (Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, 1994), 5, <http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/bitstream/1808/12407/1/Families,%20Nations%20and%20Strangers-1994.pdf>.

justly—where they successfully comply with all reasonable demands—the state of affairs resulting from their conduct is just”.²¹⁶ Although social exclusion is therefore not impossible under a relational egalitarian ethos, it is of utmost importance that agents and organizations which play roles in excluding other persons from associational life provide excellent reasons for doing so. When relational egalitarians that are excluded are able to see that they have been excluded on grounds that are reasonable, they will not see resulting states of affairs as being in any way unjust or unfair.

Because promoting social capital, maintaining open communities, and recognizing the prevalence of historical injustices are so important, egalitarian citizens would adopt a series of social practices aiming, inasmuch as equality and reason permit, at increasing general freedom of associational mobility. According to the preceding analysis, egalitarian citizens of the relational variety would want to be committed to reducing barriers to free movement between social groups, and would seek to guarantee that persons would be free to and join social groups in a manner that is unburdened by the unjust discrimination of others. The analysis developed here also suggests that relational egalitarians would want to guarantee freedom of associational exit: any person who found themselves in a social group that they no longer wanted to be a part of should not be prevented by other relational egalitarians, under any circumstances, from leaving a group. Additionally, governments would need to ensure that these forms of mobility were widely recognized as being supported by law, and made accessible in a well-publicized manner which permitted citizens to easily come to know about groups with open membership which were relevant to their needs or interests. By helping to ensure

²¹⁶ Anderson, “The Fundamental Disagreement Between Luck Egalitarians and Relational Egalitarians,” 5.

mobility, the freedom of exit, and the ability to generate new social groups and associations, it seems that relational egalitarians would help each other in avoiding the construction of socially imposed oppression, and thereby contribute to the creation of communities of the sort which Scheffler and Anderson described earlier, “in which people stand in relations of equality to others”.²¹⁷

3.4 – EQUALITY, FREEDOM, POVERTY, AND EDUCATION

Relational egalitarianism represents a departure from traditional egalitarian theory in several important ways. Many egalitarians have focused on questions of distributive justice. In contrast, the account of relational egalitarianism presented earlier focused primarily on equal social relations, and accorded lesser importance to equal distributions of income.²¹⁸ This shift in focus is articulated concisely elsewhere by Anderson, who writes that the positive aim of relational egalitarianism is “not to ensure that everyone gets what they morally deserve, but to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others”.²¹⁹

Although it is true that relational egalitarians do not uphold the more traditional egalitarian primary focus on distributive justice, it is also true that the maintenance of a relational egalitarian ethos regarding social capital would necessitate the remedy of economic disadvantage on the part of governments. Relational egalitarians may regard

²¹⁷ Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?” 289.

²¹⁸ For an extended account of relational egalitarianism, see: Elizabeth S. Anderson, “The Fundamental Disagreement Between Luck Egalitarians and Relational Egalitarians,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40, sup. 1 (2010): 1–23, doi:10.1080/00455091.2010.10717652.

²¹⁹ Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?,” 288–289.

redistributive strategies as matters of secondary importance, and as playing a facilitating role in achieving the more primary goal of establishing communities where persons stand in equal social relations with one another. Yet in order to stand in these sorts of relations, and in order to exercise freedom of association and capability for affiliation, citizens require free time, and certain fundamental socioeconomic resources (this is a potentially extensive list, including clothes, transportation, and money for social activities).²²⁰ Consider, for example, that a single mother who needs to work three jobs to support her children may not be able to afford the free time to participate in civic life, or at least not in any manner that is appropriate to one who is said to be entitled to equal social standing in a community *de jure*. In order to ensure that persons like overworked single mothers are able to exercise *de facto* capabilities for affiliation in relations of equality with others, governments must therefore be prepared to eliminate poverty.

A negative income tax such as the MINCOME experiment is one example of a kind of policy suitable to these ends. MINCOME was a project of the Government of Canada, and was carried out in Dauphin, Manitoba, during the 1970s.²²¹ It gave a guaranteed annual income (GAI) to every citizen in Dauphin, and in its immediate rural surroundings. It is noteworthy that GAI experiments have not been specifically used to target the generation of social capital. However, the establishment of an income floor such as that provided by a GAI should be able to indirectly promote social capital by providing money for basic goods such as clothes and transportation, and, perhaps more

²²⁰ Brian Barry, "Social Exclusion, Social Isolation, and the Distribution of Income," in *Understanding Social Exclusion*, ed. John Hills, Julian Le Grand, and David Piachaud (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.

²²¹ Evelyn L. Forget, "The Town with No Poverty: The Health Effects of a Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income Field Experiment," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 37, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 283–305, doi:10.2307/23050182. Funding was provided from 1974 to 1978. The MINCOME program was not renewed in 1979 by Joe Clark's conservative government.

importantly, the opportunity of time away from work. These results merit further research, but suggest that a GAI program such as MINCOME may play a role in maintaining a relational egalitarianism ethos of the sort described in the previous section.

In addition to financial resources, achieving and maintaining the kind of ethos previously described is also going to require a rethinking of education. Educators would need to show our young how to avoid the inegalitarian hoarding of social opportunities, and how to avoid social exploitation. The key problem which necessitates educational redress is the epistemic dimension of inequality: there are many situations in which a person who holds some hidden advantage is able to gain the upper hand in unjust social relations by deliberately misleading those persons who are less aware of the relevant circumstances. Call this the problem of relational epistemic asymmetry.

Educated persons who have been sensitized to the nuances of equal social relations may see and understand the ways in which they ought to avoid exploiting others, and accordingly will avoid treating others unequally. But the uneducated may in fact be unaware of the ways in which their oppressors are tyrannical.²²² If the educated fail to exercise *noblesse oblige*, unaware or uneducated persons may become so misled as to genuinely appreciate the help of exploiters, and might even think that an exploiter is treating them fairly. To use the terms of claims, accountability, responsibility, and compliance introduced earlier in the work of Darwall and Anderson, exploiters may be all too happy to comply with the ‘unreasonably’ tame claims and demands of the uneducated, and lack the accountability and responsibility to show the uneducated the

²²² In Hegelian-esque terms, it is better (for relational egalitarians) to be neither ‘lords’ nor ‘bondsmen’ to other humans. Without education, this fact is hard for ‘bondsmen’ to see, and easy for ‘lords’ to exploit.

ways in which their claims fall short of being as demanding as they reasonably might be. As such, the misled may mistakenly see themselves as partaking in equal social relations with the exploiter.

A good example of this is an elementary school situation in which someone who is socially less popular than another person unknowingly agrees to engage in some exploitative social practice. Suppose that they agree to engage in this exploitative social behavior on the basis that they deem the social involvement with the more popular person to be of sufficient private benefit to themselves to warrant such behavior. The exploited individual may be unaware of what might constitute a fair, respectful, and equal social practice, and may be unaware that, by agreeing to engage in this exploitative social practice which falls clearly short of what might be fair, they provide a model for emulation, and the further exploitation of others.²²³ Clearly, a lack of awareness of inequality is a serious problem for relational egalitarians who define justice as a state of affairs where “where all agents...successfully comply with all reasonable demands” that any other agents make of them.²²⁴ The core of this problem hovers around the intuitive plausibility of situations like those just described, where agents with epistemic limitations have no way of knowing what demands they might be entitled to make in a given situation, and no knowledge of what interpersonal demands would maintain or diminish their standing as equals in an unbalanced environment. This is pernicious, because those who enjoy relative advantage such as the exploiter described above may entrap the easily misled in unjust social relations before inequalities are recognized, in ways that cannot be remedied, or in ways which are emulated and perpetuated by others.

²²³ This is an excellent reason to support current anti-bullying educational policies.

²²⁴ Anderson, “The Fundamental Disagreement Between Luck Egalitarians and Relational Egalitarians,” 5.

It is therefore the case that, as Schemmel observes, epistemic problems regarding knowledge of what would constitute equal and unequal social standing “require strictly that every member of society is given the educational resources necessary to be able to avoid relational injustice”.²²⁵ In the specific case of social capital, this would require, in addition to the core observations of relational egalitarians, that facts about the value of social capital and the detriment of social exclusion were included as parts of public school curricula. A deflationary critic might suggest that this is tantamount to merely saying that kids ought to get out and play a little more, rather than a little less, albeit in fancy, drawn-out language.²²⁶ But the available details concerning social capital truly are substantial: it seems intuitively possible to teach young students that social networks are important; that good social networks will help them live longer, be more productive, and have happier lives. It seems possible to teach our young, without bending the empirical facts, that although the benefits of social capital can be yielded through membership in exclusive groups, it is instead better for the social capital of a community to form groups that are inclusive. Students can be taught that the benefits of cooperation do not rest in the controlling hands of an ever-ascending inegalitarian hierarchy of superiors, but equally, and between each other, wherever they may happen to start in life, and wherever they may happen to find themselves. The facts about social capital, social exclusion, and inequality point overwhelmingly in a direction which supports egalitarian principles and social policies: in a nutshell, research shows that for individuals, as well as groups, social capital is good²²⁷ and social exclusion²²⁸ and social inequalities²²⁹ are bad. These facts

²²⁵ Christian Schemmel, “Why Relational Egalitarians Should Care About Distributions:,” *Social Theory and Practice* 37, no. 3 (2011): 386, doi:10.5840/soctheorpract201137323.

²²⁶ Note that teachers in physical education would not laugh at this claim.

²²⁷ See §1.3.

seem like plausible candidates for inclusion in public curricula because they are of potential benefit to all citizens; there is nothing in these facts themselves which would require students to adopt an egalitarian social ethos. Yet for those students who take these facts seriously, the only reasonable conclusion seems to be to treat the social efforts of others with equal respect and concern.

3.5 – CONCLUSION

This thesis argued for the development of an egalitarian position regarding the promotion of social capital. In so doing, the first chapter characterized social capital, and explained why it was of normative concern. The second chapter described different approaches to the promotion of social capital, and argued that egalitarian theory offered the best possible resources for doing so in a way that was both just and fair. The third chapter drafted a path forward for egalitarians to promote social capital.

Recall the claims introduced in §1.4: the first claim held that governments ought to treat their citizens with equal concern and respect; the second held that persons ought to be free to associate as they choose, and the third held that social capital was a public good of sufficient value to be promoted politically. In §§2.2—2.3, it was argued that neoliberal constitutionalist and civic republican modes of promoting social capital were

²²⁸ Experiencing rejection from a group to which one wishes to belong is surprisingly distressing. See Naomi I. Eisenberger, Matthew D. Lieberman, and Kipling D. Williams, “Does Rejection Hurt? An fMRI Study of Social Exclusion,” *Science* 302, no. 5643 (2003): 290–292, doi:10.1126/science.1089134.

²²⁹ Michael T. Schmitt, Nyla R. Branscombe, and Diane M. Kappen, “Attitudes Toward Group-based Inequality: Social Dominance or Social Identity?,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 42, no. 2 (2003): 161–186, doi:10.1348/014466603322127166.

likely to falter in providing a satisfactory balance between freedom and equality. In §2.4, egalitarian pluralism was shown to offer a promising route forward in this regard, in that it advocated equal concern and respect for all citizens, thereby fulfilling the key equality desideratum articulated in §1.4. But, as seen, the emphasis of egalitarian pluralism was political in nature, and focused too little on the social and civic sphere. In §3.2, the introduction of relational egalitarianism permitted an approach that was consistent with egalitarianism, more generally speaking, in that it maintained the underlying egalitarian commitment for equal concern and respect for all persons. However, relational egalitarianism modified this by moving away from the solely political realm, and presented a relational model for looking at social capital in an egalitarian way. This investigation helped to round out a social analog to egalitarian pluralism, and allowed for the development of a social ethos for social capital, proposed in §3.3. This social ethos sought to ensure that persons were free to pursue many associational ends by (a) promoting intergroup mobility, (b) the freedom of exit, and (c) the freedom to generate new social circumstances. By achieving relations of greater social equality between citizens, the exercising of a relational egalitarian ethos for social capital looks to be able to reduce negative externalities, reduce social exclusion, and promote greater social freedom for individuals. These results fully satisfy the goal articulated in §1.4 by balancing the competing claims of freedom and equality while promoting social capital.

It should seem reasonable to demand that policy-makers and researchers who wish to promote social capital ought to set clear objectives, and evaluate whether or not these objectives are being met effectively and efficiently. Yet the absence of a solid definition or system of measurement for social capital all but ensures that such a demand

will not be met. And given the many social, economic and political benefits of social capital (§1.3), as well as the considerable academic enthusiasm for the topic, it seems unlikely that governments or researchers will detract from the growing policy inertia of social capital on the basis of poor definitional or methodological foundations alone. So, given this enthusiasm and inertia, this thesis suggested that limiting the ways in which governments promote social capital might be a more realistic goal. One justifiable way to limit the promotion of social capital discussed here was that of criticizing the promotion of social capital on normative grounds. The current promotion of social capital by governments in the UK, USA, and Canada may indeed be the result of best intentions among politicians and policy makers. However, normatively speaking, any number of citizens who are aware of these policies could justifiably claim them to be unfair (§2.2) and exclusionary (§2.3). To avoid these criticisms, states would do well to consider a more egalitarian approach, such as the strategy of cultivating a better social ethos, as articulated in §§3.3—3.4. Policy-makers and scholars may also find the egalitarian analysis of equal and unequal forms of social capital presented in chapter 3 to be useful in determining where and how to more effectively spend research and policy dollars. As long as the political inertia of social capital remains strong, the quest to ensure the normative soundness of political involvement in social capital must continue to move forward.

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