

**1st International CIRIEC Research Conference on the
Social Economy**

**Indicators of Altruism: Social Inclusion and Identity
Construction in Australia**

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TITLE: INDICATORS OF ALTRUISM: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION IN AUSTRALIA

KEYWORDS: social capital, philanthropy, volunteering, identity construction

STREAM: I The social economy in communities: an international view

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récent recherche measuring le présence social capital un individuel niveau dans australie examiner au-dessus 7000 Australien dans urbain et rural endroit (Alessandrini, 2005). _ le analyse examiner le deconstructed concept social capital, comprising civique enclenchement, social activité et réseau influencer. _ un certain nombre facteur devenir évident comme statistique significatif. _ matériel prospérité par exemple être positif corréler avec haut niveau civique enclenchement et réseau influencer. _ éducation niveau cependant être trouver avoir un fort lien. _ mais ce qui être le raccordement avec autre social caractéristique ? _ un loin exploration le lien entre indicateur social capital et appartenance comme indigène identité être revealing, mais son signification debatable given le concourant socio économique caractéristique. _ emploi statut et revenu aussi être indiquer comme significatif, et montrer un statistique lien avec le nature volunteering entreprendre. _ ces avec plus marginal attachement le travailler marché être plus probable offrir dans art de l'auto-portrait-help et mutuel capacité, où le plus bloqué utiliser apparaître être plus incliné entreprendre philanthropique activité. _ le recherche loin indiquer que individu actif dans leur communauté à travers civique enclenchement et volunteering être plus probable considérer eux-mêmes valable et influent dans leur communauté et avoir un intérêt dans activité que avantage le large communauté et fournir aide autre. _ le concept identité construction développer par Anthony Giddens (1991) fournir un utile véhicule pour considering le ` continu projet le art de l'auto-portrait 'à travers qui individu construire et augmenter leur identité. _

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Investigación reciente que mide la presencia del capital social en un nivel individual en Australia examinada sobre 7000 australianos en las localizaciones urbanas y rurales (Alessandrini, 2005). El análisis examinó deconstructed el concepto del capital social, abarcando el contrato cívico, la actividad social y redes de influencia. Un número de factores llegaron a ser evidentes como estadístico significativos. La riqueza material por ejemplo fue correlacionada positivamente con los altos niveles del contrato cívico y las redes de la influencia. Los niveles de la educación sin embargo fueron encontrados para tener un acoplamiento más fuerte. ¿Pero cuáles son las conexiones con otras características sociales? Otra exploración de los acoplamientos entre los indicadores del capital social y la pertenencia étnica así como identidad aborigen revelaba, pero su debateable de la significación dado las características económicas socio concurrentes. El estado y la renta de empleo también fueron revelados como significativos, y demostraron un acoplamiento estadístico con la naturaleza de ofrecerse voluntariamente emprendida. Estaban más probables éstos con un accesorio más marginal al mercado de trabajo ofrecerse voluntariamente en esfuerzo personal y capacidades mutuas, donde empleado más con seguridad aparecido estar más inclinados emprender actividades filantrópicas. El más futuro de la investigación indicado que los individuos activos en sus comunidades con el contrato cívico y ofrecerse voluntariamente eran más probables considerarse valiosos e influyentes en sus comunidades y tener un interés en las actividades que benefician a comunidad más ancha y proporcionan ayuda a otras. El concepto de la construcción de la identidad desarrollado por Anthony Giddens (1991) proporciona un vehículo útil para considerar el 'proyecto en curso del uno mismo' a través de qué individuos construyen y realzan su identidad.

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Recent research measuring the presence of social capital at an individual level in Australia surveyed over 7000 Australians in urban and rural locations (Alessandrini, 2005). The analysis examined the deconstructed concept of social capital, comprising civic engagement, social activity and networks of influence. A number of factors became apparent as statistically significant. Material prosperity for example was positively correlated with high levels of civic engagement and networks of influence. Education levels however were found to have a stronger link. But what are the connections with other social characteristics? A further exploration of the links between indicators of social capital and ethnicity as well as Aboriginal identity was revealing, but its significance debateable given the concurrent socio economic characteristics. Employment status and income also were revealed as significant, and showed a statistical link with the nature of volunteering undertaken. Those with more marginal attachment to the labour market were more likely to volunteer in self-help and mutual capacities, where the more securely employed appeared to be more inclined to undertake philanthropic activities. The research further indicated that individuals active in their communities through civic engagement and volunteering were more likely to consider themselves valuable and influential in their communities and to have an interest in activities that benefit the wider community and provide assistance to others. The concept of identity construction developed by Anthony Giddens (1991) provides a useful vehicle for considering the 'ongoing project of the self' through which individuals construct and enhance their identity.

Introduction

This paper reports on a project that examined social capital in Australia, particularly [but not exclusively] in relation to blood donation. This project was funded by the Australian Research Council and was conducted in collaboration with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service.¹ Social capital is a much debated and contested concept in the social sciences and more specifically in the field of public policy. It is highly acclaimed an indicator of social engagement and capacity and also as a means to develop more appropriate and responsive public policy. In Australia, measurement of social capital indicators has become institutionalised through the government body the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and is having an increasing impact on policy-making. Conceptually it is closely linked with community resilience and capacity building, factors assumed to predispose communities to manage their social problems and meet their requirements for social resources more effectively. At an individual level, social capital stocks enhance individual capacity to engage socially and civically, and improve social cohesion.

Deconstructing Social Capital

Social capital has emerged as an important component of the social economy. Although conceptually debated and theoretically contested, for practitioners it has in many respects come to form the foundation of considerations of healthy engaged communities able to sustain themselves, with resilience and with the potential for capacity building. Hence it is important to define what is intended by the use of the term.

A range of theoretical perspectives were reviewed in arriving at a working definition for this contested concept. Table 1 (below) provides a summary of several important and influential views.

Table 1: Social Policy Theorists Compared

Theorists	Definition	Purpose	Analytical unit/site of capital accumulation
Bourdieu (1986)	Resources that provide access to group goods	To secure economic capital	Individuals in competition
Coleman (1988)	Aspects of social structure that actors can use as resources to achieve their	To secure resources of all kinds	Individuals in family and community settings

¹ This research has been possible because of **Australian Research Council (ARC)** funding through the Linkage program, in collaboration with the **Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS)** The support and co-operation of ARCBS is gratefully acknowledged by the author.

	interests		
Putnam (1993)	Trust, norms and networks that facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit	To secure effective democracy and economy	Regions in national settings
Leonard and Onyx (2004) (including Onyx & Bullen 2000)	Resource created through connections between group members	To secure tangible outcomes through co-operation rather than force	Lateral associations between individuals and groups
Hogan and Owen (2000)	Resource accumulated by individuals, groups organisations and communities	To secure individual and mutual benefit	All levels of social organisation in individuals, social relationships and collectivities

Based on Winter, 2000 with additions Alessandrini, 2006.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently developed a conceptual framework for social capital and commenced collecting data in order to measure levels and impact in Australian communities. The ABS adopted the OECD definition of social capital:

...Networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups. (ABS, 2004)

This definition assumes a tangibility of the components of social capital and seeks to measure those, an approach not consistent with this research. For the purposes of this study, the concept of social capital focusses on individual experience and the interception of individuals with community, and was functional in nature. Hence a nuanced definition of social capital was needed indicating the priority of individual experience. Social capital is thus defined as:

the cumulative benefits such as capacity, knowledge, services and influence, arising from networks and interactions that accrue to individuals, groups of individuals and communities (Alessandrini, 2005).

Initial data analysis of the composite social capital concept revealed little: it appeared that overall Australians had roughly equal access and utility of the resources of social capital. However when the concept is examined more closely and its components examined discreetly a different picture emerges. In deconstructing social capital three key components can be identified;

- Social Interactions

These encompass such factors as the number, nature and frequency of social contacts experienced by respondents. This included visits, outings and telephone contacts, as well as recreational and cultural activities. the factors that respondents regarded as barriers to

these activities, such as transport problems and other costs associated with social activities outside the home were also identified and measured.

- Civic Engagement

The focus here was on civic activities and attitudes. As well as current volunteering and philanthropy, respondents were asked about civic activities undertaken during school years. The civic behaviour of friends and family were explored, as well as those of the respondent. A further set of multiple response questions investigated the extent to which respondents believed they had influence and whether they felt responsibility to others.

- Network Involvement

Respondents were asked about the status and diversity of their networks of friends and acquaintances in this section. In addition, several questions were asked about attitudes and tolerance. The extent and intensity of these networks is presume to enhance the personal resilience of individuals and in turn communities.

Methodology

The mass survey conducted to collect the data for this project was developed to measure the components of social capital in a disaggregated form. The clear definition of social capital thus established provided the foundation for the parameters that the investigation so that analysis of the data would enable identification indications of activity and growth and its relationship to demographic and social factors. Descriptions of social capital consistently referred to social, civic and network aspects of social interactions. Variables were therefore developed on this basis. Four key aspects were explored in the mass survey:

- Demographic characteristics

The demographic section covered age group, gender, income range, population of residential location, religious affiliation, country of birth, employment status, type of household structure, housing arrangements, level of education completed, and whether the respondent was Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander.

And the identified indicators of social capital:

- Number and intensity of social interactions
- Degree of civic engagement
- Status and extent of network involvement

The survey was designed to be self-administered and distributed by post for return by reply-paid envelope. Respondents were not identifiable, so it was not possible to track who had returned their survey and who had not. For this reason, courtesy reminder postcards with an appropriate explanation were sent to all potential respondents. A total of 27000 surveys were sent to individuals in metropolitan and country Victoria. In total, 8879 surveys were returned providing an overall response rate of 33%. Both descriptive and multivariate analysis of the data was undertaken. Initially a descriptive analysis of the data was used to summarise and describe its characteristics. In the main this involved cross tabulating demographic variables against blood donation or non blood donation variables.

- Statistical Testing

Whenever the term ‘significant difference’ is used in this report it refers to a statistically significant difference. Statistical testing is undertaken to ascertain if any difference observed between groups in relation to their responses to the survey items are genuine or not and not due to sampling error – the main source of error in survey research.

In the main Chi Square testing was undertaken because of the type of variables being analysed (questions in this survey were predominantly of a dichotomous, categorical or ordinal nature). Testing was undertaken at the 95% confidence level or at the .05 level of significance (the norm in the social sciences). These tests were employed at the descriptive stage of the analysis. Variables of significance were noted and included in multivariate modelling.

- Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analytic techniques allow for the examination of multiple variables simultaneously. The analysis chosen for this data was logistic regression. This technique measures the likelihood (in the form of an odds ratio) of an event occurring, or of membership within a particular group, given the influence of any number of independent or predictor variables. All multivariate techniques have assumptions underlying their use which depend, in part, on the type of variables being used. The majority of variables identified within the survey data were of a categorical or dichotomous nature, including the blood donor status dependent variables. The use of logistic regression was appropriate because this technique is particularly suited to use with such variables. Blocks of variables were entered into regression models. These included demographic, social, civic, and network variables.

Each was modeled separately in order to identify significant variables which predicted levels of blood donor status.

Analysis: income, education and trust

Table 2: Income by Responsibility to help others %

	under \$25000	\$25000 to \$34999	\$35000 to \$44999	\$45000 plus
strongly agree	30.3	25.0	24.4	23.9
agree	32.3	33.1	33.9	39.9
neutral	26.5	29.9	31.3	26.9
disagree	7.1	8.6	6.6	7.7
strongly disagree	3.8	3.4	3.8	1.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: *Community and Lifestyles Survey 2004* © UTas/ ARCBS

Significantly more people who had a per annum income less than \$25,000 strongly agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with higher income levels ($p < 0.05$). Significantly more people who had a per annum income greater than \$45,000 agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with higher income levels ($p < 0.05$). Significantly fewer people who had a per annum income greater than \$45,000 strongly disagreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with lower income levels ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2 illustrates that a lower percentage of those with income less than \$45000 than those in a high income bracket [over \$45000] strongly disagree that they have a responsibility to help others: 1.6 per cent compared to 3.8 per cent. In other words, fewer upper middle class people than all other groups expressed this view. There is also a steady increase in the combined percentages of those who disagree and strongly disagree that they have a responsibility to help others as incomes decrease, from 9.3 per cent for those with incomes above \$45000, peaking at 12 per cent for those with incomes between \$25000 and \$34999 and dropping slightly to 10.9 per cent for the group with the lowest incomes [under \$25000]. Those who strongly agree or agree that they have a responsibility to help others are more evenly spread across the income groups, but there are some variations: it is the \$45000 and above group that records the highest percentage of respondents that strongly agree or agree, at 63.8 per cent. So while some indications are apparent there is some contradiction evident. It is when education levels of respondents are considered that the trends become more evident: here it becomes clear that education is the defining factor.

Table 3: Highest level of education completed by Responsibility to help others %

	less than yr10	high school	TAFE	trade	Matric/ university entrance	uni degree	post grad
strongly agree	32.5	28.8	24.2	19.4	23.0	27.2	30.8
agree	24.2	30.8	29.7	37.0	34.9	41.8	40.5
neutral	28.0	28.9	34.4	30.6	31.3	23.0	22.5
disagree	8.5	7.9	9.7	9.2	7.6	6.1	5.3
strongly disagree	6.8	3.6	2.0	3.8	3.2	1.9	0.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: *Community and Lifestyles Survey 2004* © UTas/ ARCBS

Significantly more people who had an education level less than year 10 indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a trade ($p<0.05$). Significantly more people with a high school education indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a trade ($p<0.05$). Significantly more people with a university level education indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a trade ($p<0.05$). Also significantly more people with a post graduate level of education indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a trade ($p<0.05$).

Significantly more people with a trade indicated that they agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with an education level less than year 10 ($p<0.05$). Significantly more people with a university degree indicated that they agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with an education level less than year 10, high school education or TAFE level education ($p<0.05$). Significantly more people with a post graduate university degree indicated that they agreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with an education level less than year 10, high school education or TAFE level education ($p<0.05$).

Significantly more people with a TAFE level education indicated that they disagreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a post graduate level of education ($p<0.05$).

Significantly more people with an education level less than year 10 indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement that they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a TAFE level of education, university or post graduate degree ($p<0.05$). Significantly fewer people with a post graduate level of education indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement that

they “had a responsibility to help others” compared to those with a high school or TAFE level of education or a trade ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4: I can make a difference by highest education level completed %

	less than yr10	high school	TAFE	trade	matric	uni degree	post grad
strongly agree	21.1	20.3	21.2	19.5	19.1	23.8	27.8
agree	23.3	28.3	31.8	29.9	30.8	40.6	37.5
neutral	37.8	36.3	34.6	37.2	37.5	26.6	27.6
disagree	10.3	9.8	9.5	10.4	9.0	7.0	5.4
strongly disagree	7.5	5.3	2.9	3.1	3.6	2.0	1.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: *Community and Lifestyles Survey 2004* © UTas/ ARCBS

Significantly more people with a university degree indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with a matriculation level of education ($p < 0.05$). Also significantly more people with a post graduate degree indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with a high school or matriculation level of education or a trade ($p < 0.05$). Significantly more people with a university degree indicated that they agreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with less than year 10, high school, matriculation or TAFE level of education or a trade ($p < 0.05$). Also, significantly more people with a post graduate degree indicated that they agreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with less than year 10, high school or matriculation level of education ($p < 0.05$).

Significantly more people with an education level less than year 10, high school or matriculation level of education or a trade disagreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with a post graduate level of education ($p < 0.05$). Significantly more people with an education level less than year 10, strongly disagreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with a matriculation, TAFE, university or post graduate level of education or a trade ($p < 0.05$). Also significantly more people with a high school education level, strongly disagreed with the statement “I can make a difference” compared to those with a, university or post graduate level of education ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5: personal ties with legal, media, government by education completed %

personal ties		Less than year 10, year 10 and trade	HSC	TAFE	Uni/ post grad
legal	no	72.3	67.6	64.3	53.0

	yes	27.7	32.4	35.7	47.0
media	no	91.4	87.4	88.2	82.8
	yes	8.6	12.6	11.8	17.2
govt	no	91.1	88.8	88.0	82.5
	yes	8.9	11.2	12.0	17.5

Source: *Community and Lifestyles Survey 2004* © UTas/ ARCBS

Ties with media, the legal fraternity and government

Significantly more blue collar workers indicated that they did not have personal ties with the media compared to those who had college or TAFE level educations ($p < 0.05$). Significantly more college and TAFE level educated people indicated that they did not have personal ties with the media compared to those with a University degree ($p < 0.05$).

Significantly more people who were educated to college level indicated that they had personal ties to the media compared to blue collar workers ($p < 0.05$). Also significantly more people with university degrees indicated that they had personal ties with the media compared to blue collar workers, college and TAFE level educated people ($p < 0.05$).

Significantly more blue collar workers indicated that they did not have personal legal ties compared to college TAFE and university educated people ($p < 0.05$). Significantly more college and TAFE educated people did not have personal legal ties compared to university educated people ($p < 0.05$).

Significantly more university educated people indicated that they had personal legal ties compared to blue collar, college or TAFE educated people ($p < 0.05$). Also significantly more college and TAFE educated people indicated that they had personal legal ties compared to blue collar workers ($p < 0.05$). Significantly fewer university educated people indicated that they did not have personal ties with government compared to blue collar workers, college and TAFE educated people ($p < 0.05$).

Identity construction: developing an image of self in community

Giddens' concept of the self as a reflexive project is valuable in developing an understanding of mechanisms likely to enhance social capital. The 'trajectory of the self' is a continuing pre-occupation of modern individuals, who are striving to achieve an ideal through a personal program of continuous improvement (Giddens, 1991, 75). In fact, Giddens explains, this somewhat obsessive focus on the individual is a largely modern one, and 'the individual in a certain sense did not exist in traditional cultures... individuality was not prized' (Giddens, 1991, 75).

Thus it is apparent that activities that enhance social capital such as altruistic behaviour and volunteering, are related to a conscious desire to act in a way that is beneficial to other people, often initially at the instigation of a particular community crisis or life-threatening event. This is combined with a tendency to engage in the reflexive project of the self, an ongoing project of positive identity construction involving such components as adherence to a healthy lifestyle through such activities as individual sporting activities and volunteering. Again discretionary time is

essential for this, so education and resultant employment arrangements are important. Activities arising from civic engagement and social and community interactions contribute to improved self esteem and quite possibly the avoidance of elements of social exclusion and the preconditions for depression. This practice of adoption of the role of blood donor is identified by Royse(1999) where he explains an initial altruistic act such as blood donation it is this that will persuade donors to return: the identity of 'blood donor' quickly becomes important to them, and a component of the ongoing trajectory of the self.

Giddens' perspective on the self is inter-related with reflexivity particularly in regard to the body. As individuals strive to construct identities, the distinction between the physical body and the mind, or self, becomes blurred:

Like the self the body can no longer be taken as a fixed- a physiological entity- but has become deeply involved with modernity's reflexivity... The body, like the self, becomes a site of interaction, appropriation and reappropriation (Giddens, 1991, 217-9).

The body is thus the focus of activity and endeavour, verging on obsession as individuals progress the reflexive project of the self, with the goal of self improvement, enhancement and attaining goals, in the realms of the physical, the self and the blurred territory between the two.

Conclusion

While income does show some relationship to the indicators of social capital, the connection is a tenuous one. Further analysis however reveals a more concrete and sustainable relationship between these indicators and level of education completed. There is a significant link between a sense of responsibility to help others and the achievement of university entrance level education and/ or a degree. This also links with a sense of the self as have influence and relevance: again those with higher education achievements were more likely to claim 'I can make a difference' in their community. The networks established with such higher status social participants as the legal profession, media personalities or those involved in politics was seen to strengthen resilience at an individual level. The project of the self as described by Giddens, blurring between the physical and psychological components, enhance individual self image and a sense of personal empowerment. This in turn contributes to greater community cohesion through embeddedness and engagement.

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