

The effect of individual social capital on mental health

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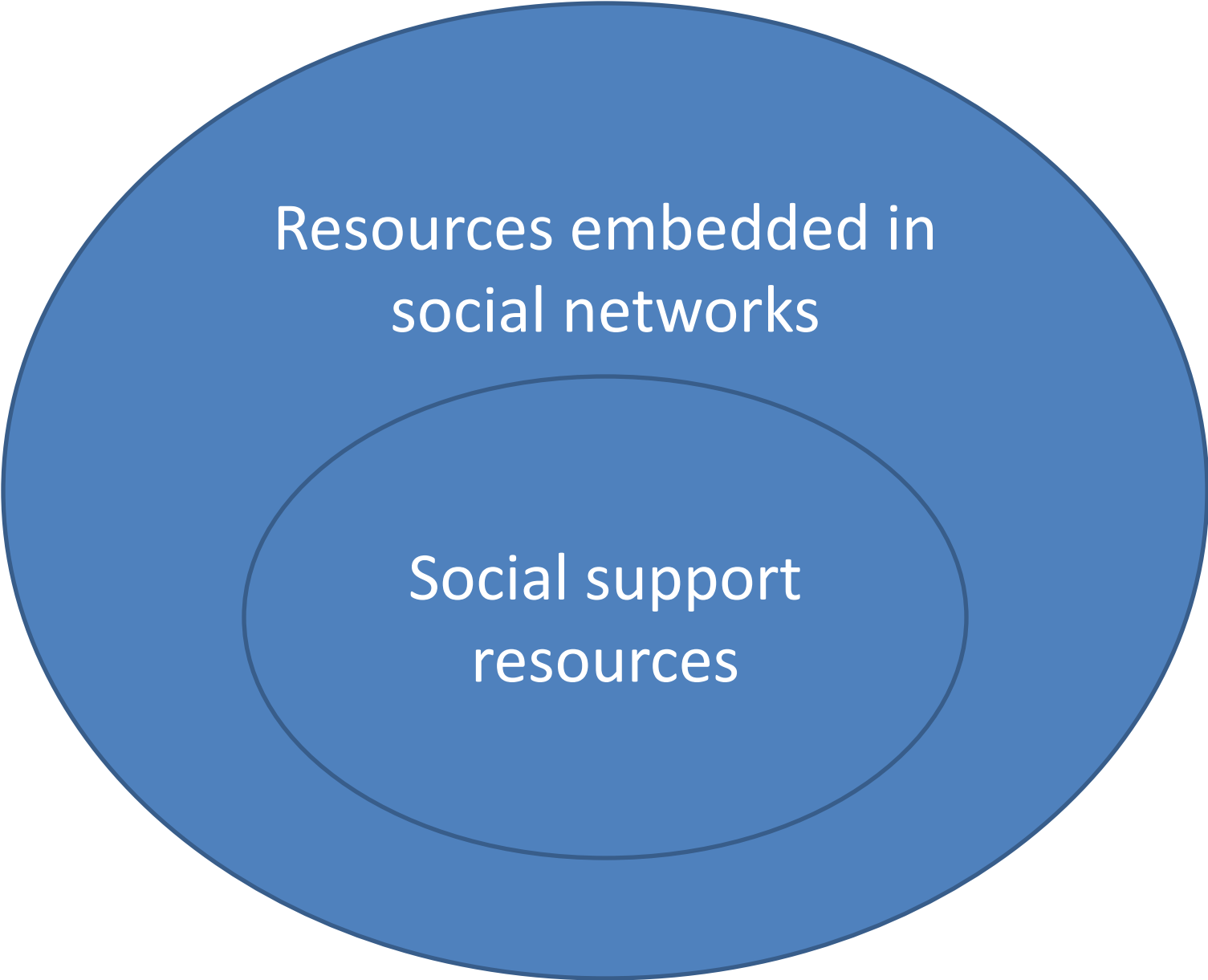
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Individual social capital

- **Collective social capital** versus **individual social capital**
- **Individual social capital**
resources embedded in social networks that can be used or accessed by individuals
- **Individual social capital > Social support**



Resources embedded in
social networks

Social support
resources

Research question 1.

Does individual social capital have
an effect on mental health
beyond social support?

Individual social capital and mental health

- **Social support → mental health**
 - Emotional support
 - Instrumental support
- **Individual social capital → mental health**
 - Affect exposure and vulnerability to health risks
 - Provide valuable health information
 - Reinforce a positive identity
 - Provide a sense of certainty

H1. Individual social capital has a positive effect on mental health beyond social support

Research question 2.
Does the tie strength matter?

Tie strength

- **Strength of weak ties:**

Access to a more diverse range of resources

H2A. Individual social capital from **weak ties has a greater positive effect on mental health than from **strong ties****

- **Strength of strong ties:**

Higher closeness of the embedded resources

H2B. Individual social capital from **strong ties has a greater positive effect on mental health than from **weak ties****

Research question 3.

Does it matter how the embedded resources are measured?

Measuring individual social capital

- **Individual social capital**

resources embedded in social networks that can be used or accessed by individuals

Social network measures \neq embedded resources

- **Resource-based measures**

Ask directly after the embedded resources

- **Position-based measures**

Consider the network members' positions as an indicator of the embedded resources

Position generator

- Asks whether the respondent “knows” anyone having an occupation from a systematic list of 10-30 different occupations
- Different position-based measures: volume, composition...
- Occupations = resources (financial rewards, status, information...)

Recent study: Song & Lin (2009)

- Found positive effects of individual social capital on mental health (CES-D), beyond social support
- Made no difference between strong and weak ties
- Used the position generator
- Resources were assessed using occupational prestige

1. Occupational prestige

- Resources are associated with **prestige**

“wealth, power, and status are universally valued resources, which can all be indicated with occupational prestige” (Lin, 1982)

2. SOCIAL CLASS (EGP)

- Resources are associated with **social class membership**
= more relational (conflict and tension)
- **EGP:** Social class classification based on employment relationship and status (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero)

- **Stigma in Global Context. Belgian Mental Health Study**
(Weighted N = 741)
- **Dependent variables**
 - GHQ = psychological distress
 - CES-D = depressive complaints (squared root transformation)
- **Independent variables**
 - MOS Social support scale
 - Individual social capital
- **Controlling**
for gender, marital status, age, education and occupational position

Occupation	Occupational Prestige Scores	Reduced EGP-Class Position
Housemaid, cleaning worker	22	Working class
Assembly line worker	30	Working class
Truck driver	33	Working class
Policeman/women	40	Working class
Electrician	44	Working class
Clerical worker	41	Middle class
Owner of small factory/firm	52	Middle class
Nurse	54	Middle class
Journalist	55	Middle class
Teacher	61	Middle class
Division head	60	High class
Manager of large factory/firm	63	High class
Owner of large factory/firm	70	High class
Lawyer	73	High class
Physician	78	High class

Individual social capital: measurement

- **Occupational prestige-based measures:**

- Number of accessed occupations
- Highest prestige level of the accessed occupations
- Range in prestige levels of the accessed occupations

→ **Factor analysis: 1 factor**

- **Social class-based measures:**

- Number of accessed occupations in the high class
- Number of accessed occupations in the middle class
- Number of accessed occupations in the working class

Individual social capital: descriptive statistics

		Range	Mean
Complete network	Occupational prestige social capital factor	-4,08 - 1,21	0,25
	High class social capital	0-5	2,49
	Middle class social capital	0-5	3,21
	Working class social capital	0-5	2,83
Strong ties	Occupational prestige social capital factor	-2,58 - 2,22	0,10
	High class social capital	0-5	1,30
	Middle class social capital	0-5	2,30
	Working class social capital	0-5	1,53
Weak ties	Occupational prestige social capital factor	-2,60 - 1,91	0,18
	High class social capital	0-5	1,63
	Middle class social capital	0-5	1,67
	Working class social capital	0-5	1,81

Individual social capital from **complete network**

	GHQ		CES-D	
Occupational prestige	ns	ns	ns	ns
social capital factor				
Social support		-.227***		-.192***

	GHQ		CES-D	
High class social capital	ns	0.109*	ns	ns
Middle class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Working class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Social support		-.221***		-.190***

Individual social capital from **strong ties**

	GHQ		CES-D	
Occupational prestige social capital factor	ns	ns	-.101**	ns
Social support		-.213***		-.194***

	GHQ		CES-D	
High class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Middle class social capital	-.515**	-.366*	-.124**	-.084*
Working class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Social support		-.199***		-.190***

Individual social capital from **weak ties**

	GHQ		CES-D	
Occupational prestige social capital factor	ns	ns	ns	ns
Social support		-.213***		-.194***

	GHQ		CES-D	
High class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Middle class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Working class social capital	ns	ns	ns	ns
Social support		-.199***		-.190***

CONCLUSION

- Individual social capital has a positive effect on mental health beyond social support
- Strength of strong ties!
- Social class-based measures > occupational prestige-based measures
- More middle class social capital from strong ties, better mental health
- More high class social capital from complete network, more psychological distress after controlling for social support

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Only main-effect model?
- Causality?
- Self-reporting bias?
- Physical health?
- Reduced EGP-class scheme?
- Gender differences?