

Potwam

A Theory Grounded Social Capital Measure: Connecting Theory, Research, and Professional Practice

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This study builds a theoretical foundation for measuring social capital for the public relations discipline by examining strategies that fit within the communication dimension of social capital.

Literature

“Excellent public relations is best conceptualized by understanding the nature of social capital accessible by the organization, including the practitioner, and the manner in which available social capital is expended to achieve important goals and objectives” (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006, p. 325).

“Public relations professionals are structurally situated in a unique position within networks where relational interactions lead to differential resources (Dodd, 2016, p. 304).

Werder (2009) examined the influence of organizational structure and practitioner decision-making behavior on message strategy use and effectiveness of different communication strategies. Zaltman and Duncan (1977) believed that multiple communication strategies can be employed to accomplish a desired outcome. Werder (2009) highlighted that two strategies -bargaining and problem-solving—incorporate J. E. Grunig’s ideas about direction and purpose of communication (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Method

A 54-item survey comprised of demographic items and measures of the structural, relational and communication dimensions of social capital was distributed to a national sample using MTurk. All variables were reliable with Cronbach’s that ranged from .70 to .92.

There was a fairly even split between respondents who identified as male (42.4%; n = 132) and as female (55.6%; n = 174). Respondent’s ages ranged from 24-64 years old. The majority of participants were White (76 %; n = 238), though African Americans (8.3%; n = 26) and those of Hispanic (7%; n = 22), Asian (5.1%; n = 16), and Native American (.3% n=1) origin were represented. Four participants (n=1.3%) self-identified as multiracial and three (1%) identified as another ethnicity not listed. Respondents worked in several industries including for-profit (61.3%, n=192), non-profit (9.9%, n=31), healthcare (10.5%, n=33), education (7.3%, n=23) government (6.4%, n=20). The most frequent income range among respondents was \$50,000-\$74,999 (29.4%, n=92).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Structural Dimension

- H1: Network size will significantly predict appropriability.
- H2: Network size will significantly predict referral.
- H3: Network size will significantly predict timing.

Relational Dimension

- H4: Trust will significantly predict use of communicative strategies (facilitative, persuasive, informative, reward, bargaining, and cooperative problem-solving)
- H5: Reciprocity will significantly predict the use of communication strategies. (facilitative, persuasive, informative, punishment, reward, and bargaining)
- H6: Reciprocity will significantly predict levels of trust.

multiple not present
 Commis questions
 more breadth in CommS...
 may by H4...

0-2000

Communicative Dimensions

RQ1: What are the communication strategies professionals use most frequently to obtain social capital?

Mean scores for communicative strategies

cont. num -

Cooperative Problem-Solving	M=5.24	N=311	SD=1.25
Informative	M=5.04	N=311	SD=1.24
Rewards	M=4.96	N=311	SD=1.17
Persuasive	M=4.66	N=311	SD=1.67
Facilitative	M=4.39	N=311	SD=1.00
Punishments	M=3.58	N=311	SD=1.39
Bargaining	M=3.57	N=311	SD=1.39

1054 →
108 -

Findings

Structural Dimension: Individual benefits are transferred to organizations based on network size. Therefore, the more connected you are as an individual, the more your organization stands to gain (appropriability). The more people you know leads to the opportunities for network expansion through weak ties. Put simply, strong ties provide opportunities for weak ties, which in turn, can evolve into strong ties themselves.

Relational Dimension: Reciprocity drives trust. The more you regularly give and take with others (norm of reciprocity), the more opportunity you have to build trust. You are more likely to use a wide variety of communication strategies with those you trust and those you feel will reciprocate.

Communication Strategies: Using Cooperative Problem-Solving is most likely to build social capital while Punishments and Bargaining is least likely to build social capital.

So, what...

This study combines decades of research to move the needle forward on how communication can impact the dimensions of social capital.

These outcomes are intrinsically linked with the KSA's of public relations practitioners in their ability to build trust, reciprocity through their communication strategies.

do you expect
obligations
will be downis?
include punishment

Network size
or
strong ties
weak ties