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Social Capital and Minority Inclusion

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**Essay for the Oslo Summer School in
Comparative Social Science Studies 2004**

Social Capital, Trust, and Participation in Comparative Perspective

By lecturer Dietlend Stolle

August 2nd – 6th 2004

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Social Capital and Minority Inclusion

My research project on ‘Democracy and Minority Inclusion’ has been made with a different theoretical framework in mind than theories of social capital. Nevertheless, I believe that thinking about my data within this framework might provide some valuable clues as to explaining or further investigating the differences I have found between my two cases in this study. Due to time and space limitations in my current project, I doubt that I shall pursue these ideas at present. However, I will here briefly present my research project as it stands and then go on to propose how I might make sense of some of my data looking at it through the lenses of social capital, and what kind of additional evidence I would have to look for to create a more comprehensive analysis of how levels of social capital might influence or not influence the degree of inclusion of minority interests in political decision making in Australia¹ and New Zealand.

The project as it stands – theoretical considerations

Curiosity might have killed the cat, but for researchers it is hopefully more of a driving force. This project is basically born out of a curiosity about why Maoris in New Zealand seem to do so much better in terms of cultural and political assertiveness compared to their Indigenous counterparts in neighbouring Australia. As I wanted to avoid getting enmeshed in a heap of vague concepts originating in cultural studies, I turned instead to theories stemming from political philosophy on minority and group rights. Looking primarily at contemporary liberal and communitarian writings on the subject, I found that they seem to have converged during the 1990s, finally resembling each other so much that people argue about which is which, and neither theory really providing anything in the way of practical guidelines for implementing or practicing their maxims.

In my search for credible alternatives I came across the work of Seyla Benhabib² who has worked with Habermas’ notion of deliberative democracy, especially in regard to women’s rights³. Like so many other rights theorists before her, she doesn’t really take issue with the practical problem of implementing rights,

¹ I should emphasise that I limited my data collection to Western Australia and thus focused on political decision making at state rather than national level.

² See for example Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2002.

³ This concern with the plight of women is reflected eg. in the chapter ‘Multiculturalism and Gendered Citizenship’ (chapter 4, pp.82-104) in *The Claims of Culture*.

but she does, however, pose the question in very interesting terms – namely that *assuming that deliberative democracy is morally feasible, is it also institutionally feasible?* This is the question I have seized upon when designing my empirical research on minority participation in political decision making in Australia and New Zealand.

The project as it stands – methodological considerations

There were several reasons for choosing Australia and New Zealand as case studies for this project, not least among them that they share a common fate of colonisation by Britain, both are settler societies and both groups of Indigenous peoples have thus seen their societies become dominated by a culture (and importantly, for the purposes of this study, a political culture) that differs significantly from their own.

Furthermore, some theorists think that Indigenous peoples should be granted more rights than other minority groups⁴, whereas others think that they are hardly likely to be able to get any⁵, which further adds to the proposition that the inclusion or exclusion of an Indigenous minority might be viewed as an extreme test case within the framework of deliberative democracy.

Having thus selected my two cases for investigating whether deliberative democracy might be viewed as an institutionally feasible way to go about ensuring minority rights, I came up with the following matrix for designing the number of interviews I wanted to carry out.⁶

	Australia	New Zealand
Governance	4 interviews	4 interviews
Media	4 interviews	4 interviews
Education	4 interviews	4 interviews

⁴ This view is especially strongly expressed by Will Kymlicka in his book *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p.55.

⁵ See for example Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, p.185

⁶ I should add that I had by then already decided on doing a qualitative study. There are several reasons for this which I will not go into here, suffice it to say that as a Habermasian notion of deliberation is hardly quantifiable anyway, it wouldn't make much sense to investigate a qualitative concept using quantitative measures.

This matrix is based on ideas put forward by Adeno Addis in his essay ‘On Human Diversity and the Limits of Toleration’⁷, where he speculates about which institutions it might be important to look at if one is to foster an milieu of deliberation. One can of course always debate about whether this list should be expanded, but there seems to be little doubt that both the areas of governance, media and education all are important in both influencing public debate and serving as forums for this debate.

Aiming for a qualitative description of the dynamics of the interaction between the two population groups in each country rather than for statistically significant material, the strategy was to aim for a handfull of interviews within each category in the matrix with people placed as centrally as possible within the systems – be that liason officers within ministries or departments, spokespeople for Indigenous interest organisations, or journalists working on a daily basis with reporting on Indigenous issues. This elitist approach can of course be criticized, but has the advantage of solely focusing on those people actually seeking engagement or debate, and having experienced it/having experiences being rejected. Out of this came 29 very open-ended interviews, divided between 12 government/interest group representatives, 11 media representatives and 6 interviews with people involved in the education sector within the two countries.

What the data shows

So far it is very early days in terms of analysing the data from the interviews, and nothing conclusive can be said about it yet. It is, however, possible to make a few very general observations about the data. First and foremost it is very striking that out of my list of presumably highly educated and well-informed respondents none of them referred to the word ‘deliberative’ in their discussion with me, and only one used the word ‘deliberation’. (As I was interested in people’s perception of how the interaction between the groups go on, I was highly conscious of not introducing the somewhat normatively loaded term myself, although I cannot of course rule out that several of my interviewees will have seen me as coming with a normative agenda in mind). On the contrary I found a rather persistent pattern (especially in Western Australia) of government employees using the term ‘consultation’ – and it is indeed a

⁷ Adeno Addis ‘On Human Diversity and the Limits of Toleration’ in Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Group Rights*, Nomos XXXIX, Yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy, New York University Press, New York, 1997.

term that also figures prominently in several of the official state government booklets I was given on cooperation between the bureaucracy and the Aboriginal minority - witness for example the guide written for bureaucrats and launched by the PM himself during my stay called 'Consulting Citizens – Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians'⁸. In contrast to this talk of consultation, the few representatives of Indigenous groups that I spoke to in both countries often referred to 'negotiations' with state or regional government, and even to 'litigation' (two interviewees, one in each country, were involved in court proceedings over rights for specific tribes they represented).

Greatly reducing the diversity of the evidence here, the following examples describing the dynamics of the deliberative/non-deliberative interaction as found in interviews can be put forward

- while journalists might profess personal attitudes of fairness in reporting on Indigenous issues, they also readily admit that it is also about selling papers;
- it turned out that the New Zealand teachers' association and its Maori branch is much more strategic and cunning in putting ideas through the political system than Habermas probably would approve of;
- significant numbers of both mainstream and Aboriginal parents leave the negotiation table, so to speak, and give up on the state education system to opt for private education;
- even government bureaucrats will admit that some policies affecting minority groups come from Mars!

Thus I have hardly found evidence that the various media-, education- and government related institutions in these countries in fact practice any form of deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the issue of minority inclusion is certainly on the agenda in most of these institutions - just witness the fact that most of them readily responded by referring me to a contact person. I also believe it is fair to say that the outcome of these interaction processes differs significantly between the two countries, with Maoris scoring higher on influence both in terms of for example media coverage of their issues, political representation (here leaving

⁸ 'Consulting Citizens: Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians', developed by the Government of Western Australia, Department of the Premier and Cabinet Citizens and Civics Unit and the Department of Indigenous Affairs in association with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission), launched on March 30th 2004 by Premier Geoff Gallop. Electronic version available at www.dia.wa.gov.au

aside the highly problematic assumption that like is best represented by like), and the proportion of Maori teachers within the education system.

So how can this be explained if neither white Australians nor Aboriginals or Pakehas nor Maori profess to Habermas' normative standards of deliberative behaviour? Clearly something else is going on.

Indicators that social capital might matter for influencing political decision making processes

As already explained, I am not going to analyse the data collected for my current project in terms of the various theories surrounding the concept of social capital. Nevertheless, having taken the first important steps towards exploring this concept, I can see how it might possibly explain some of the differences in governmental and media performance I have encountered during my collection of data from Australia and New Zealand. There is no doubt that I would have had to design my study differently if investigating different levels of social capital had been my primary aim, but in the following I shall start by using a few data examples to indicate why I think investigating levels of social capital primarily among Aboriginals and Maori might have been a fruitful approach.

Defining the concept of social capital seems to be the first stumbling block for claiming that it is a phenomenon that might matter in the types of interaction between Indigenous groups and state government I have investigated. No definition of social capital seems readily available, which would be an issue to tackle when (re)designing a research project like the present one. Here it is instructive to take a look at Putnam's many indicators of social capital as developed in *Bowling Alone*⁹, and perhaps not least some of the criticism this book has sparked. For now, however, I shall start by indicating which aspects of my data I currently believe reflect some of the issues debated within the social capital literature. For this purpose I shall start by loosely defining social capital along the lines of Hooghe and Stolle as 'the presence of dense networks within a society, and the accompanying norms of generalized trust and reciprocity [which] allow citizens to overcome collective action problems'.¹⁰

⁹ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2000

¹⁰ Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle (eds), *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.1

Certainly the types of interaction between respectively Aboriginal/Maori groups and the government which I have focused on in my qualitative interviews have centred around ‘collective action problems’, in most cases articulated by the parties as problems of securing a fair and reasonable position for these Indigenous groups within the surrounding society. Generalising broadly, both parties have presented this overall problem and its particular instances (dependent on which area the respondents happened to be working with in their daily lives) as one that needed to be resolved jointly between the interested parties. So the agents in these interaction processes viewed the issue as a collective action problem. This fact alone strongly suggests that an analysis of social capital components in these interactions might yield some interesting results.

Using a few examples from the already collected data and drawing some parallels with the existing social capital literature, I shall spend the rest of this section showing specific aspects of my research project that I believe can be related to the concept of social capital before going on to make a few proposals for how to redesign my study if social capital had indeed been my overriding theoretical framework.

As my specific research question is whether deliberative democracy is institutionally feasible, the bulk of my interviews have been with people working in government institutions and being directly responsible for contact with the relevant Indigenous group. Thus I believe some form of network analysis of social capital within these institutions and their contacts with the relevant groups would be interesting to attempt to carry out. Putnam speaks in his book on regional government in Italy about how it is desirable to create societal institutions that can minimize transaction costs.¹¹ While this idea is not expressed in such neo-economist terms in any of my interviews, it does undoubtedly lie behind some of the thinking expressed by a few respondents. The following example is from an interview with an advisor for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in WA where she speaks indirectly about how ‘transaction costs’ are met by introducing regional or place managers.

H: The structure of ATSIC is regional, but I guess other governmental structures aren’t really?

AE: Aren’t really regional – yes. And that’s the difficulty I suppose. It’s now a matter of those agencies which are human service agencies, such as health, Indigenous affairs, community

¹¹ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work, Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p.166

development; they generally have regional managers, and it is those regional managers which are engaging together at a local level. They can get together to decide on the issues, and then bring them to the executives. Obviously, their executives are generally in the Perth area, so that they need to bring those issues to the higher level of people, so that they can make some policy decisions on what's going on. The issues, I think, are highlighted in the local areas, but they still need to be brought to one focus, so that policies can be made. [...] And that's part of the scepticism with Aboriginal communities: that you have that 'fly in and fly out' – 'here's the government department people coming in and out again'. Which is why there is the idea with the Gordon Inquiry¹² to have place managers.

Another example of such a conscious effort to more easily bring viewpoints and ideas (indeed 'worlds') into contact with each other was highlighted by a visit I paid to the electoral office for the only Aboriginal member of the WA state Parliament. Unlike most other MPs, this woman from the far north of the state had declined to have her office in Perth (where 72% of the state population live). Rather she preferred to keep the office in her local community, indeed simply in a converted villa in a small town. Her secretary explained to me that not only was it important for this MP to feel close to her constituents, but as many of them furthermore would feel uncomfortable either having to travel to town (not to mention that Perth was 2300 kms away!) or even picking up the phone, it was important to have an accessible office with rooms that looked more like a home than a conference room. The secretary even explained that with ca 33% of the constituents being Aboriginal, it was also a great advantage to be able to hold meetings in the back garden, as some of the Aboriginal representatives refused to discuss important matters underneath a roof.

The fact that such particular issues related to cultural practices are not uncommon in interactions between Aboriginals/Maori and their respective surroundings, spells out, I think, the importance of taking a closer look both at institutional design and service delivery, if it is indeed a goal to facilitate a smoother resolution of collective action problems between the interested parties. And although the Australia/New Zealand scenario might be relatively new to the social capital literature¹³, the issue of institutional design certainly isn't, as witnessed for example in Stolle and Rothstein's

¹² The Gordon Inquiry was a major quantitative and qualitative survey recently carried out by the WA government about the needs and wishes of its Aboriginal population leading to several policy recommendations.

¹³ I am aware of only one contribution, namely Eva Cox, 'Australia. Making the Lucky Country' in Robert Putnam (ed), *Democracies in Flux. The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.333-358

contribution to Hooghe and Stolle, 2003¹⁴. Here they debate the direction of the causal flow between institutional performance and the development of generalised trust in society, arguing that while some theorists believe that trusting citizens will lead to better institutional performance (the basic argument of Putnam's book about regional government in Italy) the causal arrow might also point the other way, so that good institutional performance leads to trusting citizens. Furthermore, they also focus on the implementational vs the representational side of the system, arguing that while political representatives are supposed to be partisan, the institutions responsible for implementing political decisions are supposed to be impartial. Therefore they argue that those institutions responsible for implementation are more important in terms of generating trust in society.

While Stolle and Rothstein's particular study here focuses on Sweden, the issues they touch upon are certainly also reflected in my data, I believe. In both settings in which I conducted interviews, I experienced a strong conceptual distinction between the ministerial office and the department for a certain political area – often these offices would indeed be located in different places. For example I visited Te Puni Kokiri (The Department of Maori Development) at Lambton Quay – a busy Wellington shopping street, whereas the Minister for Maori Affairs Parekura Horomia has his office in what is affectionately known as 'the beehive' – the NZ Parliament Buildings, and incidently also is minister for education, fisheries, forestry and social development and employment. Thus there actually were a physical distinction between the political representative and the people responsible for implementation.

¹⁴ Bo Rothstein and Dietlind Stolle, 'Social Capital, Impartiality and the Welfare State: An Institutional Approach', Hooghe and Stolle, 2003, p.191-210.



Furthermore, several of my interviewees directly expressed an emphasis on establishing trust between government departments and the Indigenous group, whereas I only have a few examples of government employees concerned with establishing trust in their institution among the wider citizenry. Whether this was because it wasn't perceived as a problem or it was due to any possible bias introduced in the conversations by me, I cannot say – but the latter certainly seems probable! Either way, trust was a word spontaneously used by several of my interviewees, both by government representatives, but in particular by journalists working the Aboriginal/Maori round of their news paper. So while I haven't finished coding my data yet, I know from the transcripts that trust is a major recurring theme.

Another way in which the issue of institutional design cropped up in interviews, was through a focus on the land reclaim processes that are currently going on in New Zealand. Briefly speaking, the Maori and English signed a Treaty in 1841 known as The Treaty of Waitangi, where the English Crown promised some degree of protection of Maori culture and land. While the judicial aspects of this are extremely complicated, there is no doubt that a majority of Maori people in New Zealand believe that their Treaty rights have been breached, and the New Zealand government has therefore started a process whereby these claims are heard and legal action is being taken.

While the legal aspects of these processes were far too intricate for me to go into, I was nevertheless interested in speaking with some of the people involved in these interactions to hear about how they perceived the dynamics of the negotiations and legal hearings. Thus I interviewed both a government representative, namely the Chief Executive Officer for the Office of Treaty Settlements, a spokesperson for a Maori tribe currently going through the claims process, and a historian working with both sides and trying to establish historical links between the tribe and the land, tracing both written documents and oral history.

One thing these people all had in common was a great emphasis on the usefulness of establishing institutions to represent the different interests between the parties, and not least to establish trust both between these institutions and the people it represented. And as the following quote from the CEO from the government institution shows, he was also concerned with duties towards the wider public:

AH: Too many grievances of the past have resulted from the Crown coming along and dealing with whoever came along first or whoever was compliant [...] In terms of giving that process [of legal redress] some sort of legal representation, well, again I don't know of any claimant groups who have said 'no, we don't want to have a legal personality for our entity'. They need that to protect themselves, to protect their beneficiaries, to receive the settlements assets. [...] We can't tell groups how to organise their own affairs, but we have been in negotiations for 15 years, we know what works and what doesn't. So part of it is just sharing best practice, and by and large claimant groups like that. They don't take everything the Crown says as Gospel, of course not. But they are *keen* to have access to information. The other thing is the reason that I have already outlined: the Crown has a duty to the wider claimant community, and, I would argue, to the wider public, to ensure that the people it is negotiating with have some mandate to do what they are doing.

Further reflections on the responsibilities towards both Maori and the wider community is evident in the following quote by one of the historians working for The Waitangi Tribunal, which is responsible for hearing the claims and establishing the historical links before land cases go to court. Here he reflects on the need to accommodate two cultural traditions in one judicial process:

BR: We are a bicultural organisation in both respects, that is we have bicultural membership and bicultural practices, and we are where law and history meet. There is a lot of European legal process that we *have* to go through, and lawyers are a very important part of everything that we do. *We are a*

judicial body, that's the nature of the Tribunal, and that comes from the European side of things. And the Maori side is sort of blended in with all of that.

And further on the need for Maori groups to also organise themselves in institutions that are recognisable from a European legal perspective:

BR: [...] we have found that the groups that have gone with customary structures that are rooted in ancient traditions have often had a fundamental difficulty in distinguishing between ceremonial control and effective organisation. The classic case of this is with the group called Tainui from Waikato. They had a *very* strong tradition of customary leadership taking on key roles [...]. And so their structures were oriented towards a sort of ceremonial control and maintenance of the culture at all costs. They found that that wasn't an appropriate structure for the management of nature resources and they got into trouble soon after their Treaty settlement. Theirs was the first major *tribal* Treaty settlement in 1995. And they have had to go to a different sort of European style management structure to deal with the assets that they have acquired as a result of their Treaty settlement.

This appears to be a need also recognised at least by the representative of the Ngati Toa tribe I also interviewed on these matters:

MP: We have been able to establish working committees and things, with representation from tangata whenua groups - from the local Maori tribes - on each of those committees with the various local authorities. Which has helped to enhance our levels of understanding of how these councils work, it has increased their understanding of what our aspirations are and what our values are, and all that sort of thing. And it has helped to break down some of the suspicion, which has accumulated over the years because councils have been largely responsible – along with the central government, obviously – for the alienation of land and resources. [...] I mean, we are in the fortunate position where we are well organised, we formed ourselves into an incorporated society, a legal entity that has a mandate from our people to advocate for and represent the interest of Ngati Toa at a political level, whether it be national or local government level. And we have proven over the years – the Runanga [forum or council] has been established now for, well since 1989 this body has been established, and it has proven that it has the capability to represent the needs of the people and it is recognised by these various government agencies and local authorities as being *the* representative, administrative, and political advocate of Ngati Toa.

While I do not want to paint an overly rosy picture of the New Zealand situation, there is no doubt that these experiences of creating representative institutions for Maori have been highly significant both for the tribes themselves, but also for other societal institutions that have now been given an entry point for most tribes around the

country. Furthermore, I believe it is significant, as MP also points out, that this development also has led to greater Maori understanding of how local and national governing institutions work in practice and has facilitated increased exchange of viewpoints and, as she says, sharing aspirations.

This issue of getting organised and somehow form groups able to represent Aboriginal interests in interaction with governmental structures was also an issue high on the agenda with many Aboriginal people I spoke to in Western Australia. In fact, I was fortunate enough to be in the country when the Australian Prime Minister John Howard in April 2004 pronounced the 15-year experiment with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) a failure and announced the immediate abolishment of this separate representational body. While in theory this was a federal body comprised of local representatives directly elected by Aboriginal people themselves and responsible for providing a number of state government services to Aboriginal people, in fact few Aboriginals exercised their vote; and this fact coupled with a corruption scandal and other problems had led to what John Howard claimed was widespread dissatisfaction with the Commission.

I was able to conduct an interview with the head of ATSIC in Western Australia approximately two weeks after the abolishment of the organisation was announced and 6 weeks before John Howard's declared final end of it. In this interview she shared a few thoughts with me concerning institutional legitimacy and some of the possible reasons for ATSIC's failure to establish itself firmly within the Australian governmental system (I should add that both she and the WA Premier Geoff Gallop greatly emphasised the good relationship between the WA state government and the local ATSIC branch¹⁵).

CH: Sometimes, depending on how groups have been herded together and things, you've got to come up with an entirely new model [of governance]. But the people have to be involved in terms of determining what it is, [...] so that the authority is recognised. In the consultations that went with the creation of ATSIC, people said 'yeah, we want people to represent us, there ought to be regional bodies as well as a national body'. [...] Not *one* of our traditional cultures has voting as the way of determining who has authority. So 14 years ago we kind of thought, 'well, ok, alright we'll vote for people'. This far on, because you are looking at things in a more mature political sense, and there has been all this

¹⁵ This CH did both in my interview with her and a previous government seminar where both she and Dr. Geoff Gallop participated on March 30th 2004. Cooperation with ATSIC was also a recurrent theme in several interviews as well as publications both by the WA government and ATSIC itself

other work on governance, you kind of say ‘well, hang on, it was *never* gonna work!’. Because there would always be a ground swell of people in the Indigenous community who said ‘hang on, they don’t have authority’. And you are right, they don’t! Because that is not how we gave people authority. So there is that stuff – regardless of what environment we are in, our structures have to be able to be adapted to fit not only people’s different needs, but also that more maturing political discussion and development.

So while this ‘experiment with Indigenous self-government’ as one commentator dubbed it¹⁶ failed, other people working to represent the interest of Aboriginal people in the state were using different strategies at the same time. This is for example evident in the following excerpt from an interview with a lawyer representing an Aboriginal interest organisation for a particular tribe called Nyoongar, whom I also interviewed. (This organisation is called SWALSC or the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council).

WT: The way that we get authorisation and our instructions, was by setting up working parties. Working parties are there to represent the major families within Nyoongar country. And there is about 260-280 odd core families. So everybody comes down from those various families. So what we did was hold meetings with all of those families and to bring everybody together...[omission of family names]. And the family then nominates who they want to represent them in these working parties. And so the representative’s job is to feed our information back to their families and to bring their information from the family to the working party. And so those working parties make the decisions about what we do with future acts, and give us our instructions.

Evidently, this is a very different way of organising representation, but in opposition to the atmosphere at the ATSIC office during my stay, this woman was much more optimistic about the situation for the particular group of Aboriginal people she represented and rather proud of their achievements. She was adamant that authority was a bottom-up phenomenon within her organisation.

WT: It *is* a very demanding system, it is also a very expensive system in that the sheer cost of advertising, the mailouts, the community meetings – but it is a necessity in terms of the courts, to show that we are authorised. It is also a necessity in terms of us, to show that we are getting out to as many people as possible. And we really are getting our instructions from the community, and are keeping the community involved in the decision making.

¹⁶ Meaghan Shaw, ‘Howard puts ATSIC to death’, April 16th 2004 in The Age. www.theage.com.au

This issue of whether institutional structures can impact on trust levels in society is something debated by Eric M Uslaner in his contribution to Hooghe and Stolle, where he argues that it is doubtful that the state itself can produce trust¹⁷. He states on p.171 ‘I shall argue that state structures cannot produce trust, but state policies can’. This I find a very interesting proposition in terms of analysing the creation and demolition of ATSIIC, and possibly comparing and contrasting this with something like SWALSC or the New Zealand system built up in response to Treaty of Waitangi claims.

While all of the above examples have focused on the area of governance of my design matrix on p.2, I also see various links between my two other areas of investigation and some of the social capital literature. Within the area of education I am reminded specifically of the greatly detailed WA curriculum framework as opposed to the NZ one. Relating these documents to theoretical speculations about the role of formal institutions in creating trust, it is instructive to see how very detailed the WA curriculum framework is in listing the specific values the state government wants to imbue its school children with, among those that ‘Students demonstrate active citizenship through their behaviours and practices in the school environment, in accordance with the principles and values associated with the democratic process, social justice and ecological sustainability’¹⁸. The NZ curriculum framework stands in stark contrast to this – while obviously also being concerned with values, it is far less specific about those, and in particular far less specific about how such values might be instilled in pupils and subsequently measured. And while Charles Pattie et al seem to put some hope in the introduction of citizenship education in the secondary school curriculum in England and Wales¹⁹, my evidence so far points in the direction that actual interaction with children from other cultures in the school yard is more efficient than any official document for learning ‘the rules of engagement’ so to speak.

Here I also find it instructive that while Putnam states that ‘Institutions are devices for achieving *purposes*, not just for achieving *agreement*. We want government to *do* things, not just *decide* things – to educate children, pay pensioners, stop crime, create

¹⁷ Eric M Uslaner, ‘Trust, Democracy and Governance: Can Government Policies Influence Generalized Trust?’ in Hooghe and Stolle (eds), 2003, p.171-190

¹⁸ The Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarden to year 12 Education in Western Australia*, The Curriculum Council, Perth, Western Australia, 1998, p.261

¹⁹ Charles Pattie, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley, ‘Civic Attitudes and Engagement in Modern Britain’, Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government 2003, Parliamentary Affairs (2003), 56, p.616-633.

jobs, hold down prices, encourage family values, and so on'²⁰, the New Zealand Ministry of Education in fact explicitly disagrees with him. Under the heading 'About the Ministry of Education' they write on their homepage 'The Ministry's influence on education outcomes is indirect. We are not a provider of education and our purpose reflects this'²¹. Thus there seems to be far less emphasis on regulation of details within the New Zealand system than one might expect, and concerning general achievement levels between Aboriginal and Maori pupils, there seems to be no doubt that while both groups lag behind their mainstream counterparts, Maori pupils are faring much better in the New Zealand public system than Aboriginal pupils are in the Australian equivalent.

My final parameter for investigating the dynamics of Indigenous/mainstream interaction was looking at media contributions to the public debate. Here I just briefly want to mention that Putnam also puts great emphasis on the media in promoting civicness, for example in *Making Democracy Work*, where he states that 'When two citizens meet on the street in a civic region, *both* of them are likely have seen a newspaper at home that day; when two people in a less civic region meet, probably *neither* of them has' (p.97), and he also uses news paper readership as an indicator of civicness in several places in *Bowling Alone*. I am not, however, entirely convinced about the implied argument of a causal connection between media penetration and civicness. Several of my interviewees, especially within Aboriginal and Maori media, emphasised the potential harm media might also do to societal engagement between groups. Furthermore, I am not convinced about what I in connection with Benedict Anderson's famous book *Imagined Communities*²² have called 'technocratic determinism' in creating feelings of 'nationhood' or, in this instance, 'civicness'.

One final argument from the social capital debate I wish to take up here is the one about historical determinism or path dependence as described by Putnam in his explanation for different levels of civic engagement between northern and southern Italy. While his description here is highly contentious – witness for example Huyseune's contribution in Hooghe and Stolle²³ – it does raise an issue I encountered several times during my data collection. Does the historical explanation

²⁰ Putnam, 1993, p.8-9 [emphasis in original]

²¹ www.minedu.govt.nz

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983, 1991

²³ Michel Huyseune, 'Institutions and Their Impact on Social Capital and Civic Culture: The Case of Italy' in Hooghe and Stolle, 2003, p.211-230.

also enter my picture? And to what degree? First and foremost I have to answer that my selection of cases for this project is obviously based on the contention that there are some historical similarities between the two countries in that they both are settler societies colonised by the British. But according to some of the people I spoke to, this is also where the similarities stop. Several of them greatly emphasised the difference between the proportion of the Indigenous population in the two countries, their level of organisation at the time of colonisation (nomadic hunter-gatherers vs pa²⁴-dwelling farmers, warriors and international traders). Thus several interviewees reacted to the fact that I was doing a comparative study by saying that Maori and Aboriginal traditions are incomparable and this explains any differences in deliberative performance.

While I certainly do not wish to dismiss this explanation, I also agree with the theorists who say that path dependence seems to be a very sad message to send. And I am highly sceptical of the phenomena of ‘virtuous and vicious circles’ described by Putnam in his final chapter in the book on Italy. So are there grounds for optimism or not? On the question of whether there is path dependence or not, Hooghe and Stolle write in the introduction to their book (p.6) that they wish to go beyond this view, saying that ‘it is very plausible that contemporary institutional arrangements as well might facilitate or disturb the development and maintenance of social capital’. This is something Stolle continues to explore in the essay ‘Communities, Social Capital and Local Government’²⁵ where she refers to a study of the level of generalised trust in three different Swedish regions. Here she states directly in relation to the issue of historical determinism that

...the study finds that contemporary political and institutional arrangements at the regional level are important determinants of social capital. It might also be true that generalized trust has been shaped by historical forces from the middle ages, but present-day local and regional (as well as national) governments and institutions also make an impact on generalized trust. (p.185)

Further adding on p.188 that ‘In other words, I suggest that there is a relationship between political and generalized trust, and although the relationship is

²⁴ A pa is a fortified Maori village

²⁵ Dietlind Stolle, ‘Communities, Social Capital and Local Government. Generalized Trust in Regional Settings’ in S. Prakash and P. Selle (eds), *Investigating Social Capital. Comparative Perspectives on Civil Society, Participation and Governance*, Sage India Ltd, 2004, p.184-206

surely reciprocal, I also suggest that the main flow of causality goes from state performance [...] to political trust to generalized trust'. This certainly spells good news for those of my respondents working to reform political institutions better to accommodate the needs and wishes of all population groups and simultaneously serve societal interests. So while I agree with Sidney Tarrow that 'social scientists ignore history at their peril'²⁶ I also see a great need in my project to distinguish between historical factors and institutional factors in explaining my findings.

Proposal for further research.

Hopefully the previous section has made it clear that there seems to be several points in common between my current research project and the social capital literature. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that I would have to drastically redesign my methodology and data collection process had social capital indeed been my overriding theoretical framework. Here several possibilities seem to present themselves, but the one which most directly appeals to my research question concerning the institutional feasibility of deliberative democracy, seems to be to look at institutional design and how this may foster/hinder development of social capital and generalised trust.

So which types of data would I need to conduct such an analysis? While Putnam and others often use quantitative methods in documenting developments in social capital, there is no doubt that it would also be possible to use qualitative data of the type I have already collected. I am, however, doubtful that I would be able to remain entirely within a qualitative framework²⁷. The most expedient way of attempting to measure something like trust in public institutions (in this case trust in their ability to deliberate) seems to be via carrying out surveys – ideally among the wider population, but certainly among those minority populations directly affected by it.

So while I still believe 'deliberation' is a concept best investigated using qualitative methods, I also believe that to speculate about how different levels of

²⁶ Sidney Tarrow, 'Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*' in *American Political Science Review*, Cambridge University Press, 90 (2) 1996, p.389-397, (p.396).

²⁷ I realise that Huckfeldt et al have attempted to measure something they call 'collective deliberation' in terms of response time to questions about party and candidate preferences under a US presidential election campaign – see Robert Huckfeldt, John Sprague and Jeffrey Levine, 'The Dynamics of Collective Deliberation in the 1996 Election: Campaign Effects on Accessibility, Certainty, and Accuracy' in *American Political Science Review*, volume 94, No.3 September 2000, p.641-651. I am, however, not convinced that they are measuring 'deliberation'; rather I believe it is communicative efficiency.

social capital might affect (perceived) deliberative outcomes, it would be expedient to carry out surveys among the Aboriginal and Maori populations in the two countries (ideally supplemented with wider surveys) about their trust in government institutions in general (both on the political and implementational side).

Other important measurements, which I think would complement my present data well, would be to look at the ethnic diversity within the institutions in question. Several of my respondents in the already conducted interviews commented on the importance of having bureaucrats, schoolteachers and other practitioners from the relevant minorities represented among staff, and such statistical material should be possible to come by fairly easily as it is something measured at least in WA.

On top of these specific kinds of data directly related to the institutional feasibility of deliberative democracy, there is no doubt that it would also be interesting to follow Uslaner and others on the idea that social and economic factors affect levels of social capital. Several statistics have been produced on the socio-economic standing of respectively Aboriginals and Maori in relation to the surrounding society, and comparing relative income levels, education levels, school drop-out rates and other socio-economic indicators would undoubtedly go a long way towards explaining differences in deliberative performance.

Therefore it should be possible to supplement my already existing qualitative data with some quantitative indicators specifically aimed at the institutions under investigation. This coupled with already published statistical material should provide a sound basis for analysing deliberative practices and outcomes within a theoretical framework based on social capital. However, despite Tarrow's applause to Putnam for his combination of qualitative and quantitative measurements in *Making Democracy Work*²⁸, I do believe the combination of types of data is a path one has to tread carefully – which is, indeed, also Tarrow's message.

Another classic trap in evaluating social capital and institutional performance is to establish the direction of any causal arrows between the two. Do governmental institutions perform better (in terms of reaching agreement with Indigenous minorities) because they have Indigenous employees? Or do they hire Indigenous employees because they are performing better and better understand the need to have such employees? Or – including a temporal argument – because they have been

²⁸ Tarrow p.389.

performing better in the past, and hence qualified Indigenous employees are available on the job market? Asking such questions opens up a whole can of worms, not only on the question of the ethnic composition of government employees, but on every indicator used within a study.

Related to the question about causality is another one of agency. How much is the state itself responsible for, and how much can be attributed to civic attitudes amongst citizens in general in terms of achieving deliberative success? As Tarrow points out on p.395, the lack of state agency in Putnam's book on Italy is one of the major flaws in his explanatory model. And as my existing data has been collected with state agency very much in mind (if I did not believe state structures could influence deliberative outcomes, there would not be much point to my study), I am rather afraid that I might be putting too little emphasis on citizen agency. Several checks and balances are needed to keep such a study on the right course.

Nevertheless I remain convinced that there would be knowledge to gain from thinking 'social capital' into my study. One obvious example is the phenomena of separate Aboriginal institutions vs integrated Maori sections in institutions, which I came across during my data collection. ATSIC was already under heavy political fire at least from the federal government and media when I arrived in WA, and one reason that was often pointed to was that it was responsible for health provisions, economic assistance and other welfare benefits directly distributed to the Aboriginal population outside the existing general state system. Hence one of my respondents said that many Australians were left with the feeling that 'I thought we were all Australians, why are these Australians, just because they are Aboriginal, getting these different things?', and John Howard talked about 'mainstreaming' Aboriginal welfare provisions²⁹.

Leaving aside the question of social fairness, there seems to be little doubt that the fact that Maori families in need would collect their benefits from the same source as everybody else in society does make a difference. As pointed out by Sheri Berman³⁰ and others, it is not the complexity and number of institutional networks within a society that is likely to produce social capital – as she aptly demonstrates in her reservations about associational life in (pre-)Nazi Germany. It is probably better to

²⁹ See for example the report by Catherine McGrath, 'Federal Government plans to abolish ATSIC' from ABC Online, Thursday April 15th 2004, available at www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2004/s1088224.htm

³⁰ Sheri Berman, 'Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic' in *World Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 49 (3) 1997, p.1-20

look at what Putnam calls bonding vs bridging capital in terms of trust and network formation. Sheri Berman's argument is that if group lines are not crossed, we risk producing a rather dangerous form of associational life³¹.

On the other hand, ensuring regular encounters between Aboriginals and the Australian population in general might be easier said than done due to demographic factors. Because, while Maoris comprise approximately 15% of the New Zealand population, only 2% of all Australians are Aboriginal. Adding to this, large segments of the Aboriginal population still live on reserves and might not be particularly interested in regular encounters (many reserves are owned by Aboriginal groups who control entry to their land through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs). On top of these demographic differences between Australia and New Zealand, there are also huge differences in state structure between the two countries. First and foremost Australia is a federation with strong state governments and a voting system based on single member constituencies dominated by Labour and The Liberal Party. In opposition to this, New Zealand has abolished its regional structure and now has a central government elected through mixed member proportional representation and with no upper house. So there are many factors impacting on institutional networks within these two countries – possibly so many that a contrastive rather than a comparative analysis would make more sense!

Here I am reminded especially of Skocpol et al's article³² on the links between the US federal system and the organisational structure of civic associations in that country. As she demonstrates, there seems to be a high level of correlation between political and associational structures in the US. On p.533 it is stated thus: 'organization-builders who face complex challenges in conditions of uncertainty are inclined to copy well-understood, already legitimate models in their environment'. If this is a proposition that can be transferred to other national contexts, it could shed some interesting light on the relative successes of organisations like for example ATSI and SWALSC in Western Australia and Ngati Toa and The Waitangi Tribunal in New Zealand.

³¹ Berman p.5

³² Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz and Ziad Munson, 'A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States' in *American Political Science Review*, Volume 94, No.3 September 2000, p.527-546.

Conclusion

Debate issues of action oriented research and the problem of making policy recommendations – see Tarrow p.396. Take a look at pdf file no 3 by Colin C Williams about government priorities in Britain.

Although not specifically concerned with the plight of indigenous peoples, Benhabib does turn very briefly to this question on p.185: “While being greatly sceptical about the chances for survival of many of these cultural groups, I think that from the standpoint of deliberative democracy, we need to create institutions through which members of these communities can negotiate and debate the future of their own conditions of existence”.

See also Putnam notes p.6, relating to Italy book p.63 on normativity and political science

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