

GSAPS THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

An Empirical Study of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Japan

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Research Background and Objective

This thesis aims to investigate the contemporary status of social capital in Japan by applying a two-dimensional approach: bonding and bridging axis. Bonding social capital and bridging social capital are regarded as two forms of social capital and can be interpreted as two components of social capital. Substantial literatures have argued about the distinction of bonding and bridging social capital from the perspectives of its influence, regional distribution, etc. This thesis tries to figure out social capital's development at individual and regional levels by dividing social capital into bonding and bridging two parts. By making comparison of bonding and bridging social capital from two levels described above, the status of social capital in Japan will be illustrated.

The definition of social capital in this research stems from social capital theory of Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1988). Putnam (2000) points out that social capital is generated from the interaction among people through the networks. Coleman (1988) also argues that social capital inheres in the social capital relations among actors. Although there is still no uniform definition of social capital, the consensus of scholars is that social networks among people are essential part of social capital. The social capital investigated in this thesis is primary focusing on the structural phenomena of social relations such as social networks and interactions among people.

Bonding and bridging social capital are discussed separately since the argument of negative externalities of bonding social capital (Putnam and Goss 2000). This is also an important reason why these two types of social capital are distinguished in substantial literatures. Although there are many discussions about bonding and bridging social capital's distinction, most of them are focusing on the differences but few of them have answered how the two are different and why they are different. This research tries to figure out their distinctions from determinants to phenomenon, filling in the blank of bonding and bridging social capital research in Japan.

To investigate the distinction of bonding and bridging social capital, the research will be conducted from two levels: determinants at individual level and phenomenon at regional level.

The main research question for this thesis is: What is the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital? To answer this question, 2 sub-questions are set as follows: 1) Are bonding and bridging social capital different in determinants at the individual level? 2) Are bonding and bridging social capital different in variation pattern between rural and urban areas?

Structure and Main Results

This thesis consists of 5 chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the background and research objective. Literature review and research question setting is given in the chapter 2. Chapter 3 and 4 are the analytical part addressing the two sub-research questions. The last chapter is a summary and conclusion of this research including the academic contribution and policy implications.

chapter 3 investigates bonding and bridging social capital at individual level, figuring out the factors that will influence their formation by applying a questionnaire data analysis. The factors examined include

personal and regional factors. The result shows that, bonding and bridging social capital indeed have different determinants. Home ownership and educational level are two factors that can make distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Home ownership is significantly correlated with bonding social capital, while educational level is significantly correlated with bridging social capital. On comparing the coefficients of these variables, it can be observed that apart from these two factors, bonding and bridging social capital have many common determinants. Such observation indicates that though bonding and bridging social capital have different aspects, they have common characteristics, thereby causing them to overlap rather than being completely distinct from each other.

In Chapter 4, the spatial distribution of bonding and bridging social capital at the regional level was investigated by comparing their stock in rural and urban areas. To evaluate the difference of bonding and bridging social capital in these two regions, Propensity Score Matching method is used. The result indicates that both bonding and bridging social capital are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The traditional theory about rural-urban differences in social capital is inadequate for explaining the contemporary situation in Japan. Such a result implies that the limitation for rural people to extend the external links rarely exists due to the economic growth and technology development in Japan. The development of bridging social capital suggested by previous studies is demonstrated in the research again. This research, by applying empirical method provided even further findings that is the bridging social capital in rural areas even tends to be higher than urban areas in Japan nowadays. The traditional idea that bonding social capital is rich in rural area while bridging social capital is rich in urban area is one of the evidences to support the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. As suggested in Chapter 3, these two types of social capital consist of overlapped aspects, hence there is a possibility that the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital in Japan may not be similar to other countries.

Findings and Academic Contribution

The key academic contribution of this research is the retesting of bonding and bridging social capital's distinction at individual and regional levels by focusing on the determinants and phenomenon. Though previous studies have highlighted the distinction between bonding and bridging social capitals, how and why are they different is rarely answered. This research comprehensively examined the bonding and bridging social capital in Japan, thereby succeeding in identifying the differences in social capitals along with the commonalities which overlap. These findings will help to interpret these two types social capital more precisely than before.

Main References

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