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# EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN MEASURES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND DEMOCRACY

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# Examining the Link between Measures of Social Capital and Democracy


## Abstract

*Dominant political theory suggests that social capital is an important prerequisite for sustaining democracy and upholding the civic culture in society. This paper examines the link between facets of social capital and outcomes usually associated with democracy, namely tolerance of diversity, civic commitment and political participation, using data on the South African city of Cape Town from the exploratory 2003 Cape Area Study. A descriptive analysis of respondents' views on tolerance, civic commitment and political participation is followed by the explanatory analysis of the relationship between facets of social capital and these variables. General interpersonal trust and associational activism are both low in Cape Town, but these variables do not explain the positive attitudes towards diversity observed. While generalised trust is a weak predictor of civic commitment, associational activism is a positive and statistically significant predictor hereof. Social capital does little to explain levels of individual political participation. Thus, despite the fact that generalised trust and associational activism are both low in Cape Town, these variables do not suffice to explain the apathetic levels of political participation observed. The findings suggest that the relationship between social capital and democracy is varied and inconsistent, with some facets of social capital playing a more important role than others in determining democratic outcomes.*


## 1. Introduction

Social capital refers to the attitudinal aspect of trust and the structural aspect of associations or networks which are shared between people. It is a productive resource vested in human relations and can be used to achieve narrower as well as broader political, social and economic outcomes (Narayan, 1999).

Trust and networks are widely held to be the foundations for the creation and sustenance of co-operation, reciprocity and collective action (Putnam, 1993). Social capital is usually measured in terms of the level of generalised

interpersonal trust and level of associational activism in society.[1] Trust is conceptualised as the individual's tendency to generally trust other people. Individuals are understood to possess one of two personality traits; either they are trusting of others generally or they are not. Networks are conceptualised in terms of interaction with others in the formal context of a club, organisation or association of some sort. This is otherwise known as associational activism.

Social capital has been linked to a host of hypothesised outcomes, such as macroeconomic growth (Knack & Keefer, 1997), tolerance (Inglehart, 1990), political participation and civic mindedness (Putnam, 1993). The main argument underpinning many of these theories relates to the manner in which social capital spurs a series of behavioural and attitudinal mannerisms which contribute towards the strengthening of democracy, the development of a co-operative culture and the establishment of harmonious societal interaction. The more we trust and actively engage with others, the more likely we are to co-operate, act tolerantly, embrace the fundamentals of democracy and display the type of civic mindedness which helps democratic institutions flourish and societies prosper. [1] (See Putnam 1993, 1995; Inglehart,1997 and Norris, 2002.)

The suggestion that social capital may foster greater civic mindedness, tolerance and political participation makes it very appealing for an emerging democracy such as South Africa, especially in light of what the country hopes to achieve and the social challenges which it faces. South Africa's history is one of oppression, political unrest and segregation, the legacy of which still plagues it today. Along with these inherited disparities, the country has one of the highest levels of income inequality and poverty in the world, the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection and high rates of both unemployment and crime. These factors present immense hurdles to any initiative aimed at developing and sustaining democracy. Achieving democratic stability is not only about establishing democratic institutions, conducting free and fair elections and drawing up a Constitution. A range of other factors such as tolerance and co-operation amongst citizens as well as communication and co-operation between citizens and elected leaders, are necessary to sustain democracy. South Africa is struggling to achieve these very outcomes, all of which are said to have been linked to social capital. How can social capital work to strengthen South Africa's democracy? In order to answer this question I discuss the relevance of social capital for South Africa's democracy.

[1] The World Values Survey (WVS) item, which asks the respondent to choose between the two response options: "Generally speaking most people can be trust OR You can't be too careful when dealing with people", is the most widely used survey item to measure general interpersonal trust.

Social capital may help forge links between people from different backgrounds and in so doing promote integration and social cohesion (Stone and Hughes, 2001). According to Putnam (1993, 2000) individuals who actively participate in formal organisations, for example sports or recreational clubs and professional associations, have wider networks of association and are thus more likely to interact with people of diverse backgrounds, races and cultures. These interactive opportunities allow individuals to learn the social skills of tolerance and co-operation which may help mend the social divisions in society. This form of social capital – often referred to as bridging social capital - may be vital for building links between the many diverse cultural, ethnic and racial groups in country like South Africa. The 'nation-building' campaign introduced by the Mandela government, was implemented to achieve a similar purpose i.e. to bring South Africans closer together and instil in society a sense of unity, while maintaining an appreciation for diversity.

Beyond this broad social functioning, social capital takes other forms and may serve a host other purposes. Firstly, social capital may help address the rational choice dilemmas of collective action and the tragedy of the commons. As rational actors, individuals are expected to act in their own self-interest rather than to the benefit of the community, which inhibits resource sharing and collective action. Social capital may help address this, because it is argued that if community members have a sufficient supply of trust and reciprocity this may promote mutual co-operation, making resource sharing a plausible reality (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 2000). Unlike social capital theory, rational choice theory does not account for the possibility that relations between community members may rest on sufficient trust and reciprocity so as to sustain co-operative behaviours and adherence to an unwritten code of mutual respect.

Secondly, citizens working in co-operation with each other may help fill the gaps in service delivery. Neighbourhood watch organisations for example, emerge because community members initiate safety and security schemes in a way that government is unable to. However, these organisations and forms of collective action cannot function without the necessary level of trust and relational activity between neighbours. This outcome can be linked to a form of social capital termed bonding social capital, which refers to trust and networks between people who share close connections with each other such as friends, neighbours and family members (Mihaylova, 2004).

Thirdly, the citizen's role in the democracy does not end with the simple casting of the vote or the paying of taxes. Citizens have the responsibility to hold government accountable and make their voices heard in the policy process. But, as Putnam (1993) argues, holding government accountable depends on a very important prerequisite - social capital, which may induce co-operation and

collective action. Rate payers' associations for example, are formal structures for holding government accountable at the local level and can only function effectively with sufficient trust amongst its members. These forms of civic and political participation are important for strengthening the participatory democracy. The state can assist in the creation and mobilisation of social capital by offering its citizens the freedoms of speech and association as well as providing channels for active participation in the government process (Holm, 2004; Landman, 2004; Fedderke, 1999).

Individuals may make use social capital as a coping strategy as well as to access opportunities for long term personal advancement. People rely on the network of relations closest to them for various purposes, be it as a matter of daily survival or to obtain employment and access to certain information and services. The survival of these networks depends on trust and the expectation of reciprocity (Briggs, 1998).

Not only does social capital vary in extent, in the sense that some societies can be spoken about as having more or less social capital than others, but it also varies in type. Different types of social capital have the potential to yield varied outcomes, be it in relation to the individual, community or wide society (Stone and Hughes, 2001).

Social capital, in the forms of trust and associational activism[2], has been defined as a feature of social life which has the power to change economies, sustain democracy and address intolerance and social disparities. It has been linked to a broad range of theoretical outcomes and empirical data has shown it to be associated with a societal character where citizens are more likely to engage in community and political life and are, as Putnam puts it, 'prepared to act collectively to achieve their goals' (Putnam, 1993: 182). In a previous working paper I showed that some dimensions of social capital are not captured in the two standard measures. The question posed in this paper relates to the manner in which certain outcome linked to democracy, namely of tolerance, civic commitment and political participation correlate, with the various dimensions of social capital measured. The paper begins with a brief overview of the stock of social capital in Cape Town in terms of general interpersonal trust, associational activism, neighbourliness as well as kin-based networks, using Cape Area Study 2003 data.[3] I introduce the measures which make up the hypothesised outcomes

[2] Not all forms of trust and associational activism are positive or embracing and social capital can take negative as well as positive forms. Negative forms include strong bonds of association which act to the exclusion of others as well as groups which act in the negative interests of society such as the KKK, Mafia organisations and gangs.

[3] For a detailed descriptive and exploratory analysis of social capital in Cape Town, please see Jooste (2006).

of social capital under investigation in Cape Town, proceeding to conduct an explanatory analysis of the link between social capital and 1) tolerance of diversity, 2) civic commitment and 3) political participation.

# 2. Descriptive Summary of Social Capital in Cape Town

Where trust is considered to be the attitudinal component of social capital, contact and associational activism are the structural components. CAS 2003 tested aspects related to both attitudinal and structural forms of social capital.[4] The data offers a useful descriptive overview of the distribution of various forms of social capital in the sample. The descriptive findings from the CAS 2003 data suggest that while general interpersonal trust is low, respondents display strong links and relatively greater levels of trust and faith in neighbours, as captured by variables measuring *neighbourliness*. Respondents also enjoy regular contact with family and relatives. The tables below offer an overview of these findings.

The percentage frequency distributions show that while respondents tend to distrust people generally, they are far more eager to express trust and faith in their neighbours to help them when in need and to generally look out for their interests. The findings suggest that the general interpersonal trust question falls short in helping us measure the extent to which people trust and indeed it is necessary to probe a radius of trust rather than rely on this single item to inform our understanding of where people do and do not place their trust.

In terms of associational activism, the table below shows that apart from membership in religious organisations, respondents are generally inactive in associations and clubs.

[4] For more detail on the CAS 2003 survey design, fieldwork and sampling, please see Seekings, *et al* 2004. The full CAS 2003 questionnaire is available on the following website: www.cssr.uct.ac.za.

*Table 1 Percentage Frequency Distributions for Social Capital Variables (CAS2003)*

| Social Capital Variables | *(%) Percentage of responses in each category* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Strong disagree*** | ***Disagree*** | ***Neither*** | ***Agree*** | ***Strongly agree*** |
| ***General Trust*** | | | | | |
| Generally speaking most people can be trusted. | 17 | **36** | 13 | 30 | 4 |
| ***Neighbourliness*** | | | | | |
| People in your area are generally helpful. | 2 | 12 | 12 | **58** | 16 |
| People in your area would stop a break-in if they saw it. | 3 | 8 | 7 | **59** | 22 |
| People in your area would keep an eye on you house. | 1 | 9 | 8 | **56** | 25 |
| ***Frequency of Contact with Neighbours and Family/Relatives*** | | | | | |
| | ***Everyday*** | ***Several times a week*** | ***Several times a month*** | ***Several times a year*** | ***Less than several times a year*** |
| How often do you visit or speak to family or relatives? | 39 | **34** | 16 | 7 | 3 |
| How often do you visit or speak to neighbours? | 45 | **28** | 11 | 3 | 14 |
| How often do you phone/e-mail family or relatives? | 17 | 32 | **26** | 4 | 22 |
| How often do you phone/e-mail neighbours? | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | **75** |

*Note:* Percentage frequency in bold indicates median response,

*Table 2 Percentage Frequency Distributions for Associational Activism (CAS2003)*

| ***Are you a leader or active member or inactive member in this kind of organisation?*** | ***Active member*** | ***Inactive member*** | ***Not a member*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| Religious group e.g Church or Mosque | 53 | 21 | 25 |
| Sports Club or organisation | 17 | 5 | 78 |
| Group that does things for the community | 14 | 9 | 77 |
| Local self-help association e.g. stokvel or burial | 9 | 8 | 83 |
| Trade Union | 8 | 8 | 88 |
| Group that does things concerned with local matters such as a school PTA | 7 | 6 | 87 |
| Neighbourhood watch or street committee | 6 | 7 | 86 |
| A political party | 5 | 13 | 81 |
| Business or Professional Association | 5 | 3 | 92 |
| Another social club | .5 | 8 | 90 |
| Other | .5 | 5 | 92 |

While on a descriptive level these findings offer an interesting birds-eye view of social capital in Cape Town, the objective of this paper is to delve more deeply into the significance of social capital as it relates to aspects of tolerance, civic commitment and political participation. The question being addressed is: how well does social capital help us understand aspects of tolerance, political participation and civic commitment in Cape Town? Essentially we are trying to understand social capital as a determinant of these specific social and political attitudes and behaviours.

## Delineating between dimensions of social capital

The CAS2003 data was used to delineate between dimensions of social capital such that we can speak about general trust as distinct from neighbourly social capital and contact with neighbours as distinct from contact with family and relatives. The following are the results of the factor and reliability analysis undertaken using the CAS data[5], the factors observed are:

1. Interpersonal trust – single item construct
2. Neighbourliness– three item construct
3. Face-to-face contact with family/relatives– single item construct
4. Face-to-face contact with neighbours– single item construct
5. Phone/Email contact with family-relative– single item construct
6. Phone/Email contact with neighbours– single item construct
7. Membership activity in a religious organisation– single item construct
8. Membership activity in a socio-political or community organisation - six item construct

The analysis suggests that social capital is a multi-dimensional concept and investigating the relationship between social capital and other aspects of social and or political life entails taking cognisance of this factor.

The analysis will proceed by firstly providing a descriptive overview of people's responses to questions measuring attitudes of tolerance and civic commitment as well as the extent of political participation. From here the paper shifts to hypothesis testing where the relationship between the dimensions of social capital will be analysed in relation to these hypothesised.

[5] See Jooste (2006) for more detail.

# 3. Descriptive Analysis of Dependent Variable: The outcomes of democracy

Various outcomes have been linked to social capital and many of these are believed to strengthen democracy. This theory is under investigation here and using the CAS 2003 data, the paper takes a closer at the extent to which social capital is linked to tolerance of diversity, civic commitment and political participation in Cape Town.[6]

## Tolerance of Diversity

As with the rest of South Africa, segregation policies succeeded in burning bridges between the diverse cultural and racial groups in Cape Town. Rebuilding linkages between people of different backgrounds is important, not only for democracy but for correcting the many social imbalances inherited from the past. Thus, the willingness and ability of people to tolerate diversity is fundamental in building a more integrated society in Cape Town. In order to gauge tolerance of diversity, we tested the extent to which respondents are open to learning about and integrating with different people.

We presented respondents with three statements, the first one asking about their propensity to like people with different views, the second one about whether exposure to other cultures enriches one's life and thirdly whether it is desirable to create a single community out of all people in Cape Town. These items are used as indicators of tolerance of diversity and allow us some basic insight into people's attitudes towards others, referring specifically to people who are different to themselves.

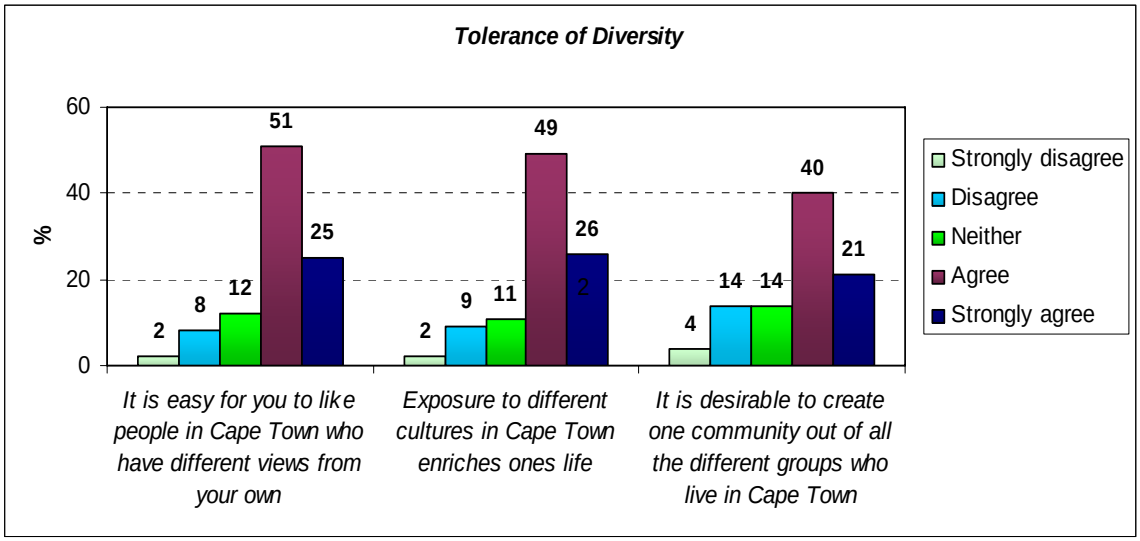
The framing of these questions in relation to 'people who are different' may be seen as insufficient in tapping into tolerance in the strict sense, such that tolerance is something we subject onto a 'least-liked' group or person. [7] While I do not claim to be measuring tolerance of out-groups or least-liked groups in this strict sense, these items suffice in tapping into the extent to which respondents are willing to tolerate a diverse Cape Town and the likelihood of their participation in this process given that they find it easy to like people with different views to their own and that they find mixing with other cultures to be an enriching experience. These types of attitudinal questions may do more to

[6] For recodes and summary statistics of all the independent and dependent variables used, please see Appendix A.

[7] See for example discussion on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of tolerance in Gibson, 1992.

inform our understanding of the concept of bridging social capital than general interpersonal trust does.

*Figure 1: Distribution of responses to Tolerance of Diversity items*




As is clear from Figure 1 above, across all three questions, respondents consistently agree with the statements. This is more so the case with the first two items, where 76 percent and 75 percent of respondents agree or agree strongly that it is easy to like people with different views and that exposure to other culture enriches their lives, respectively. As for the third item 61 percent of respondents agree or agree strongly with this statement. While the modal response to each of the three questions is 'agree', people are more likely to disagree and strongly disagree with the statement 'it is desirable to create one community out of all the different groups who live in Cape Town', than they are to disagree with the first two statements. These results are not in the least surprising since the third question asks not only about tolerating diverse groups, but whether these diverse groups should be integrated into one. The use of the words 'create one community' may be interpreted to mean that accepting and embracing other cultures amounts to sacrificing one's own, unique culture to adopt a singular Cape Town culture. This interpretation may have invoked disagreement in some respondents.

It is clear from the descriptive statistics that respondents generally favour interaction with others and exposure to different cultures. Not only do they feel capable of liking people who are different but they view integration as a socially favourable outcome. This is indeed an encouraging find, especially in light of

attempts to remedy racial segregation, exclusion and social intolerance in Cape Town specifically.[8]

Compared to the stock of generalised trust in Cape Town, the attitude of tolerance towards diversity is far more prevalent. Clearly there is a lack of aggregate congruence between responses to the general trust item and attitudes towards diversity. I will investigate this further in the correlation analysis to follow later in the paper.

## Civic Commitment

According to the political culture paradigm, "a commitment to democratic values is a necessary condition for the consolidation of the democratic system" (Norris, 2000: 127). One such democratic value pertains to civic responsibility, the notion that citizens are not passive actors in the democracy and that their responsibilities go beyond the casting of the vote. Civic commitment sustains the democratic culture and may also assist in achieving the developmental and policy objectives of the state. Indeed, democracy benefits when citizens are conscience of their role and are willing to combine their efforts with fellow citizens as well as the state in pursuit of such development (Holm, 2004).

Government has South African citizens to take up their citizenry responsibility and secure the collective welfare and development of their communities, as a matter of democratic importance.[9]

As such, we sought to test the extent of civic commitment in Cape Town, firstly by asking about the importance of giving one's time towards community development. We also probed the respondent's sense of responsibility to act as a

[8] The Western Cape Government's slogan *' A home for all'*, headlines initiatives to foster a society based on inclusion and integration and to promote a sense of equality while embracing diversity. Started in 2004 this campaign highlights the need for research into issues such as tolerance of diversity. In CAS 2003, respondents are expressing attitudes which bode well for the implementation of such initiatives geared at bridging the social divide in Cape Town.

[9] The Mandela government launched campaigns such as 'Masakhane'. (See Mandela, 1995: Opening address at launch of Masakhane) The 'Masakhane' campaign was geared towards empowering community members to work towards common goals. In more recent times, President Thabo Mbeki has made a similar call on citizens for greater volunteerism and participation in community development projects as well as in securing the safety and well being of their resident neighbourhood. See *State of the Nation Address*, presented to Parliament by President Thabo Mbeki., 2002 and 2005, url::www.info.gov.za/speeches/son/ . See also Western Cape Department of Community Safety Budget Report 2004/5, which makes reference to plans in reaction to President Mbeki's call for greater volunteerism and national patriotism www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/speeches/2004/jun/74661.

role model. To push the parameters further we tested the extent of commitment to the community when this is weighed against opportunities for personal prosperity. This measure tests the extent to which respondents are prepared to place the welfare of the community above their own.

*Table 2: Percentage Frequency Table: Civic Commitment*

| | **Strongly disagree** | **Disagree** | **Neither** | **Agree** | **Strongly agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **%** | **%** | **%** | **%** | **%** |
| ***We all have a responsibility to give our time and resources in order to develop our communities*** | 2 | 4 | 11 | **58** | 20 |
| ***You have a responsibility to act as a role model to young people in your community*** | 1 | 3 | 8 | **52** | 32 |
| ***You have a responsibility to stay and help build you community, even if it means passing up a better job or moving to a nicer area.*** | 8 | 25 | 14 | **35** | 13 |

*Note:* Percentage frequency in bold indicates median response.

As observed in Table 2, over 75 percent of respondents agree that they have a responsibility to 'contribute time and resources' as well as 'act as a role model' in their communities and thus a strong sense of civic commitment is evident. For the third measure, which is arguably the most demanding scenario presented to respondents, it is not surprising that the frequencies across the two agree categories drops to 48 percent. The median and modal response for all three items is 'agree', thus the overall picture is positive and the results suggest that Capetonians are prepared to take an active rather than passive role in the development of their communities.

The results imply that respondents are not blind to their democratic role and in fact express attitudes which align very strongly with the notions of participatory citizenship. The strength of civic responsibility may tie in strongly with the earlier findings related to neighbourliness. Those who have good relations with their neighbours are likely to take an interest in the development of their existing surroundings. They may also view this development as the responsibility of community members such as themselves, rather than the state or an NGO. I will explore this proposition further, when I analyse the relationship between trust and contact with neighbours as it may predict the respondents' sense of civic commitment.

# Political Participation

Participation in government decision-making and policy is a right afforded to citizens in a legitimate democracy. What do we mean by political participation? Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995:37) define political participation by its purpose: "political participation affords citizens in a democracy an opportunity to communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preferences and to put pressure on them to respond". Democracy rests on the foundation that each citizen be granted equal say in government and that channels for participation be made available to achieve this (de Villiers, 2001). The flow of information between citizen and state is vital in sustaining a co-operative relationship between these actors as well as ensuring that the actions of government fit the demands of the people. [10] My interest in political participation pertains to its relationship with social capital. Members of societies with a large stock of social capital are expected to be active role players in the political and policy processes (Putnam, 1993).

While voting in elections is the most fundamental and popular form of participation, there are other channels which citizens may utilize to make their voices heard. Participation may take place collectively, for example as part of an interest group or civic organisation. However, there are various acts which citizens can take as individuals and participation need not be a group endeavour. In this light, I will look at both forms of political participation, that which involves citizens taking some form of collective action, as well as individual action.

## (a) Engagement with Local Ward Councillor

Local government is closest to the people both in terms of physical proximity and policy interests. Unlike the National and Provincial spheres, Local government represents the specific consensus and negotiation of citizen interests in a particular jurisdiction and delivers not only basic services, but also opportunities for public participation (Oldfield, 2002). Elected local Ward Councillors play an important role in making government accessible to the people. Residents may use Ward Councillors to channel their views and raise issues which they feel need addressing. Ward Councillors represent the needs of local residents, they report and meet with residents on a regular basis and react to the concerns of the local community. This two-way street of relations is

[10] Linking social capital, which forges bridges between the people and political actors, can be sustained through public participation, assuming that adequate opportunities for this interaction are provided by government (Woolcock, 1998).

designed to ensure that residents have a voice and further that government pays attention to the needs and concerns of residents.

To what extent do citizens in Cape Town make use of the channels for participation with Ward Councillors? To answer this question we probed whether respondents ever wrote a letter to their Councillor, attended a meeting where the Councillor had spoken and if they ever spoke to the Councillor on the phone or face-to-face. Apart from attendance at a public meeting where the Councillor has spoken, these acts all place the onus on the individual to address the Councillor as a solitary actor, rather than as part of a group.

*Table 3: Percentage Frequency Table: Engagement of Local Ward Councillors*

| | **No, Never** | **Yes, Once** | **Yes, a few times** | **Yes, many times** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| ***How often have you written a letter to the Ward Councillor*** | **93** | 3 | 2 | 1 | 100 |
| ***How often have you attended public meetings where the Ward Councillor spoke?*** | **80** | 7 | 6 | 5 | 100 |
| ***How often have you spoken to the Ward Councillor face-to-face or on the phone?*** | **76** | 10 | 4 | 3 | 100 |

*Note:* Percentage frequency in bold indicates median response.

The results from Table 3 above, suggest that participation in local government is infrequent, with over 75 percent of respondents stating that they have never had any type of engagement with their Ward Councillors. While these results tell us little about why respondents are not engaging, the descriptive findings do not bode well for efforts to sustain a participatory democracy. If people do not participate, their concerns, issues and problems will not filter through to the policy process and may not be adequately addressed by government. Similarly if citizens do take responsibility for holding government accountable for its actions, decision-making will become an exclusionary rather than inclusive process.

How might we understand these results? Perhaps respondents are satisfied with local government services, giving them no reason to contact their councillor or perhaps this apathy is related to perceptions that Councillors are disinterested and inactive in dealing with issues when raised. From the CAS 2003 data we know that very few respondents feel capable of rating the performance of their Ward Councillor, probably because they do not know who their Councillor is. When asked to name their Councillor, more than 70 percent of respondents were

unable to do so and when asked how well their Ward Councillor performs 5 percent said 'very well', 19 percent said 'well', 16 percent said 'badly', 8 percent said 'very badly' and a considerably higher 52 percent of respondents stated that they 'do not know'. In terms of satisfaction with service delivery, responses varied depending on the service in question, with over 70 percent of respondents stating that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with both electricity and water provision. However, respondents were generally less satisfied with road repair/ construction and housing, with 55 percent and 63 percent stating that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with road repair/construction and housing, respectively. It seems that a combination of factors may explain low level of participation with Ward Councillors, be it because Councillors are inactive and thus unknown to residents or that residents feel no reason to engage with their Councillors[11].

While these are plausible hypotheses, I am particularly interested in the role which social capital plays, if any, in explaining the noted level of inactivity. Do networks of association predict participation in local government? Are the low levels of generalised trust observed in Cape Town linked to the low levels of engagement with local Ward Councillors? Indeed the Putnam (1993) theory would support this finding, if it were the case. I will investigate further whether these low levels of public participation can be attributed to low levels of generalised trust.

## (b) Collective action

While the forms of participation I have discussed thus far relate to individual action, there are a range of activities which can be undertaken alongside other citizens, be it formal or informal. The measures at our disposal allow for some comparison between the extent of individual and collective forms of political participation. To test the latter form of participation, we asked about whether citizens have ever and would ever, attend a community meeting, get together with others to raise an issue, attend a demonstration or protest march as well as sign a petition. The results are reflected in the table below.

[11] Another finding worth noting is the perceived extent of corruption in local government. In CAS we asked respondents 'how many officials in local government do you think are involved in corruption?', responses were as follows, All :10%, Most : 24%, Some: 34%, A few: 17%, None : 0% and Don't Know: 15%. Although this question does not specifically ask about Ward Councillors, the perceptions that local government is generally corrupt, may well explain some of the noted apathy of respondents to engage with their Ward Councillors.

*Table 4: Percentage Frequency Table: Collective Action*

| *Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. In the past year, please tell me whether you have done any of the following?* | **No, never** | **No, but would if I had a chance** | **Yes, once** | **Yes, often** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| ***Attended a community meeting*** | 38 | **23** | 18 | 21 | 100 |
| ***Got together with others to raise an issue*** | **51** | 27 | 12 | 10 | 100 |
| ***Attended a demonstration or protest march*** | **65** | 20 | 6 | 9 | 100 |
| ***Signed a petition*** | **52** | 20 | 8 | 19 | 100 |

*Note:* Percentage frequency in bold indicates median response.

I observed from Table 4 above that while the modal response for each form of political participation is 'No, never', at least 20 percent of respondents indicated that although they had not undertaken any of these actions, they would do so if they had a chance. This is somewhat encouraging and gives us some indication that non-participation does not necessarily signal a lack of interest, but that it may instead be linked to a lack of time or opportunity. To get a better perspective on political participation I thought it worthwhile to add the percentage frequencies of the two 'yes' columns. The highest levels of participation, are noted with respect to attendance at a community meeting (39 percent) followed by signing a petition (27 percent) and getting together with others to raise an issue (22 percent). Attendance at a demonstration or protest is notably lower (15 percent). Respondents are not wholly inactive, and reasonable percentages are taking up their citizenry role to mobilise in response to certain issues and concerns. Thus, a fair amount of citizens have been and are willing to take part in various forms of collective civic and political participation.

Comparing these results to the extent of engagement with the local government, respondents are clearly more likely to take up political participation as part of a group than as an individual. Collective action may well be a more effective mechanism for drawing government's attention to certain issues. Indeed, when it comes to getting government to listen, there is some truth in the old adage about strength in numbers. As such citizens may feel more empowered acting as part of a group, rather than acting as a solitary voice in the governance process. From the CAS 2003 data we know that the idea of a group endeavour may well motivate participation, when asked whether they felt they would be able to 'get together with others to make elected leaders listen, 44 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed and considerably less, (20 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings are encouraging especially when we consider that over 50 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'politics and government seem so complicated, they can't really understand

what's going on'. Thus, despite their confusion with politics, many respondents do feel that as part of a group, they can make elected leaders listen.

It is clear that some forms of political participation are more favoured than others and the implications which various facets of social capital might have hereon will be analysed more closely in the explanatory analysis. Already the findings thus far suggest that there is something about groups and networks of association which may motivate public participation and civic action. Does organisational membership make political participation more likely? I will address this question and others relating to the link between social capital and political participation.

# 4. Explanatory Analysis: Drawing linkages with social capital

This paper proceeds to provide an explanatory analysis of the dimensions of social capital as they link to democracy. The main statistical tool used is correlation analysis.

## Linking social capital to tolerance of diversity

We have revealed widespread and general agreement that it is possible and indeed favourable to have a more integrated social and cultural life in Cape Town. These attitudes were labelled 'tolerance of diversity'. According to Putnam (1993, 2000) societies displaying high levels of social capital are likely to have strong democratic foundations and thus large reservoirs of social tolerance, high levels of civic engagement, interest in politics, political efficacy and more effective institutions of representative democracy. Using the WVS, Inglehart (1990,1997) and Norris (2002) observed a tendency for countries to be distributed in such a way that those with higher levels of interpersonal trust and associational activism, happen to be the countries which are considered to be the most socially tolerant, democratically stable and economically well-off in the world[12]. These findings affirm, very loosely, the Putnam theory of an association between social capital and democratic, social and economic welfare.

I am specifically interested in one facet of this argument; that which suggests that the stock of interpersonal trust and the extent of formal associational

[12] Various indicators are used to define country status, such as Freedom House scores for determining the democratic stability of a country and the WVS tolerance measure as an indicator of the level of tolerance and UNDP figures for gauging economic welfare of a country. See (Norris, 2002 :183) and (Inglehart 1990 : 235).

membership are strong predictors of tolerance and attitudes towards diversity. Instead of assuming that general trust leads to tolerance of diversity and a greater sense of embracement of other cultures, we have at our disposal a set of measures designed to measure these outcomes more explicitly. Thus, I will be testing the correlation and predictive validity which general trust and formal associational activity displays in relation to these attitudes.

The first hypothesis is that interpersonal trust is positively associated with tolerance of diversity. The corresponding Null hypothesis is that interpersonal trust is negatively or not at all associated with tolerance of diversity. Secondly, I will test the hypothesis that formal associational activity is positively associated with tolerance of diversity. The Null hypothesis is therefore that formal associational activity is negatively or not at all associated with tolerance of diversity. Table 5 below displays the correlations between the dimensions of social capital delineated in relation to tolerance of diversity[13].

Some very interesting patterns are evident. Looking at the first row, it is clear that there exists no relationship between general trust and tolerance of diversity. Thus, we can infer virtually nothing about people's attitudes towards diversity by measuring their general disposition to trust other people. This finding contradicts the popular practice of equating interpersonal trust with bridging social capital. The use of interpersonal trust as a proxy for bridging social capital is widespread, but the results suggest that it is far too simplistic to presume that general interpersonal trust tells us anything about the stock of tolerance towards diversity.

Thus, despite low levels of trust in others generally; respondents in the CAS sample display positive attitudes towards diversity. Perhaps these findings indicate features unique to the Cape Town context; perhaps the respondents in our sample are outliers in the general picture. Indeed locality is important, and social capital needs to be studied not only as a concept which varies over time, but which also varies between places. It is plausible that general trust has less to do with bridging social cleavages and more to do with responses to crime and safety. In a society such as our own, one of the most violent in the world, it is not unlikely that people associate trust with vulnerability to crime and this may

[13] A factor analysis test was undertaken to gauge the validity of the *tolerance of diversity* measures. The results showed a single factor extracted, with an Eigen value of .998, which is just outside the border of our criteria for accepting a valid factor. The reliability analysis yielded an Alpha = .65 which is a sound indicator that these three variables are tapping into the same underlying concept. The value of these measures rests in the distinct manner in which each one taps into a different aspect of tolerance of diversity, thus I did not combine the three items to form a single construct. Instead the correlation analysis entailed looking at the independent variables in relation to each of the three tolerance questions separately.

have little to do with whether or not people are willing to tolerate and integrate with people of other cultures and with different likes to their own.

*Table 5 Correlation Matrix: Association between social capital and tolerance of diversity*

| **Kendall Tau-B Correlations**<br><br>***Social capital in relation to tolerance of diversity*** | Its easy for you to like people with views different to yours | Exposure to different cultures enriches ones life | It is desirable to create one community out of all the groups in Cape Town |
|---|---|---|---|
| Most people can be trusted | .035 | .019 | .059 |
| Neighbourliness | .128** | .194** | .122** |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with neighbours | .076* | -.003 | .027 |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with family/relatives | .098** | .061 | .029 |
| How often you phone/email your neighbours | -.005 | -.136** | -0.019 |
| How often you phone or email family/relatives | .131** | .05 | .001 |
| Membership activity in religious organization | .028 | -.033 | .053 |
| Membership activity in socio-political or community organizations | -.016 | -.101** | .004 |

*Notes:*
**. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level
*. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

In order then to thoroughly understand the relationship between trust and attitudes towards diversity, we would need to investigate the sources of social capital in more depth. I do not have room here to investigate the sources of interpersonal trust, and indeed the CAS 2003 data may not suffice to test the sources of trust adequately. [14] But, we can certainly broaden our understanding of social capital and its implications by analysing other social capital variables which may influence and explain tolerance of diversity more appropriately than the variable of general trust in others.

[14] Grooteart and Narayan et al (2004) note the difficulties associated with analysing trust as a dependent variable with the use of social survey data. Because trust is borne out of a complex array of historical, cultural, social and political as well as economic factors we can only assess very specific variables which may have an impact on trust, and are unlikely to be able to use multi-variate analysis to shape an overall view of the causes of trust. They suggest that qualitative research may serve this purpose better.

Formal associational activity similarly has an insignificant and weak relationship with respect to tolerance of diversity. Apart from a modest correlation (Tau-B = -.101**) between membership in socio-political or community organisations and the belief that exposure to others enriches life, there are no other statistically significant or substantively important observations. Associational activism plays virtually no role in explaining attitudes which are aligned with the notion of bridging social and cultural cleavages. And in the one instance of a significant relationship, the direction is negative rather than positive. This result is rather unexpected and may suggest that bonding social capital is working against bridging social capital.[15] It is likely that group members are closely knit and thus there is a lessened desire and will to embrace outsiders. Newcomers and people from outside the circle may be perceived as potential free-riders and burdens to the community or group, giving members little reason to welcome them.

Both interpersonal trust and associational activism are weak in explaining attitudes towards diversity and these findings fail to falsify the null hypotheses. The finding that associational activism is a weak predictor of tolerant attitudes, contradicts suggestions that formal membership in groups begets open-mindedness and liberal attitudes towards those who are different. Clearly the specific functioning of these organisations needs to be analysed in more depth before we can make either claim assertively and conclusively. But even in this basic analysis it is clear that civic and cultural organizations do not necessarily function as breeding grounds for integration and cross-cutting associations as Putnam (2000) assumes.

Accounting for the fact that the highest levels of membership activity in Cape Town is in religious organisations, respondents are unlikely to meet people from other religions at their local Church, Mosque or Synagogue. Generally, the level of member interaction at a religious meeting is likely to be minimal, leaving little time to discuss and address pertinent social issues such as diversity. Even in interactive religious sessions, members are unlikely to engage with people of other racial and ethnic groups, since many religious organisations still tend to be racially and ethnically homogenous rather than heterogeneous.

In CAS 2003 we probed the extent of racial and class homogeneity in religious organisations, the results are presented below:

[15] See Briggs (1998) for discussion on bonding social capital in the neighbourhood and the implications hereof for neighbourhood welfare as well as greater society.

| ***What proportion of the other members of the group are of the same race and class as you?*** | **%** |
|---|---|
| All/Almost all | 46 |
| Most | 19 |
| Some | 12 |
| None/Few | 3 |
| Don't Know | 20 |
| Total | 100 |

The general finding is that religious groups tend to be homogenous in terms of race and class rather than heterogeneous, with 65 percent of respondents stating that all/almost all or most other members are of the same race as themselves. These results affirm my expectation that religious groups in Cape Town are not integrated enough to offer broad opportunities for the development of cross-cutting social relations.

Furthermore, the decision to join an association is likely to rest in part on proximity and convenience and people are thus likely to join groups because they are locally based and easy to reach, rather than venture long distances into other suburbs or parts of Cape Town.

These considerations hamper any hope that organisations and groups easily bring together people of different backgrounds and cultures. Associational membership has many assumed benefits and outcomes, which of course require further investigation. But for now it is clear that one outcome which is weakly associated herewith is the development of open-minded and tolerant attitudes. As long as these organisations tend to be homogenous, this trend is likely to prevail.

If associational activism is not influencing the formation of socially valued attitudes such as tolerance, then where are these views being shaped? One argument is that people are more likely to develop and discuss such issues in the context of safer, more familiar environments such as those shared with family, neighbours and friends (Newton, 2001). To investigate the probability of this further, the links between tolerance of diversity and other facets of social capital were analysed.

The three variables measuring norms of trust and reciprocity with neighbours were reduced to a single construct, named *neighbourliness*. [16] It is clear that

[16] This was done using the Compute command in SPSS, whereby a single variable was created by effectively regressing the three items. As was noted, the results of the factor and reliability analysis indicated that these variables form a robust construct of measures tapping into the same underlying concept of norms of trust and reciprocity between neighbours. Thus, the correlation analysis was undertaken using this combined three-item construct in relation to the dependent variable(s), rather than applying these as three singular items.

neighbourliness has far more explanatory power than general trust in terms of predicting attitudes towards 'diversity'. Although the correlations are not strong, they are positive and statistically significant and relative to general trust, neighbourliness is a stronger explanatory variable. This significant finding suggests that people who agree that neighbours are reliable and trustworthy, are likely to tolerate diversity more than those who do not. Neighbourliness explains these attitudes in a way that general interpersonal trust fails to. Perhaps by offering respondents a scenario or context in relation to trust, in this case the neighbourhood, we stand to learn more about their attitudes on social issues such as diversity, rather than by simply assuming that the views on trusting others generally provides us with insight into this.

In some respects I anticipated that neighbourliness might foster negative attitudes towards others, in line with the Fukuyama (2000) argument that bonding social capital leads to 'outsider' effects; attitudes and behaviours which reject those outside the group. However, it is clear from our findings that this is not the case. Instead it seems that the perception of strong in-group relations between neighbours is positively associated with favourable views on diversity. People who believe that their neighbours are helpful and co-operative may well display open-mindedness and favourable views of other people because they are exposed to benevolent qualities in their existing environment. If people are familiar with habits of trust and reciprocity in the neighbourhood, perhaps this is also likely to be the place where socially positive attitudes are borne from, attitudes such as tolerance and open-mindedness.

Contact with neighbours was insignificant in explaining attitudes towards diversity, with only one positive and weakly significant observation noted, in relation to face-to-face contact and the ease with which respondents are able to 'like other people'. One peculiar observation relates to phone/email contact with neighbours which is negatively associated with the view that exposure to other cultures is life enriching (Tau-B = -.136**). Respondents who believe that habits of reciprocity and trust prevail in their neighbourhood may be more open-minded and tolerant of diversity, but face-to-face contact with neighbours makes for a relatively weakened tendency for respondents to display these attitudes.

Only two significant correlations emerged in relation to contact with family and relatives, both of which are positive. There is a weak association between agreement with the statement that it is easy to like other people who have different views, and how often phone/email contact is had with kin (Tau-B = .131**), as well as with face-to-face contact with kin, (Tau-B = .098**). This may be a sign that conversations with family and relatives plays a part in shaping individuals views on social issues such as diversity.

It is worthwhile mentioning that it is the attitudinal component of trust in neighbours rather than the structural measures of contact with neighbours which is more significant in explaining attitudes towards diversity. It is the perception about the environment in which we reside rather than our participation therein that makes more of a (positive) difference in our attitudes towards different people. In this light, the negative relationship between phone/email contact and agreement that mixing with other cultures is an enriching experience, (Tau-B = -.136**) suggests that perhaps contact with neighbours increases the likelihood of displaying reservations towards 'others' and people who are different, eluding to an insider-outsider effect. It is plausible that interaction with neighbours brings people closer to together in a way that discourages cross-cutting cleavages. This is an interesting find and Fukuyama's argument describes this situation more accurately, where this structural dimension of bonding social capital is functioning to produce exclusionary attitudes. [17]

The CAS 2003 data has offered some important preliminary indications that exploring more closely the significance of neighbourhood social capital in Cape Town would be a worthwhile path for future research. Not only have we learned that the quality of neighbourhood relations are good and that respondents have regular contact with their neighbours, but trust in neighbours has an implication on social attitudes, such as those towards diversity which are deemed important for the growth of a stable democratic and social functioning. These consequences have been overlooked by research focused solely on general trust. The implication here is that in order to utilise social capital as an explanatory tool, there are benefits in treating the concept as multi-faceted.

## Linking social capital to civic commitment

Next, I test the hypotheses that 1) interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are positively associated with respondents' sense of civic commitment. The corresponding Null hypotheses are that 1) interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are negatively or not at all associated with the respondents sense of civic commitment. Civic commitment, as discussed earlier is an important indicator of respondents' attitudes towards their community and the developmental role which they perceive themselves playing as citizens in the democracy. [18]

[17] See also Portes (1998), Putzel (1997) as well as Cox and Caldwell (2000) for further discussion on the impact of inward-focused bonding social capital and the manner in which it can inhibit the development and maintenance of cross-cutting ties.

[18] In order to test the validity and reliability of these items as measures tapping into the same underlying concept of civic commitment, Factor and Reliability analyses were conducted. A single factor was extracted and Eigen value of 1.32 was observed, with these variables

*Table 6. Correlation Table: Association between social capital and civic commitment*

| **Kendall Tau-B Correlations**<br><br>***Social capital in relation to civic commitment*** | **Sense of responsibility towards developing community** | **Sense of responsibility towards acting as a role model in community** | **Sense of responsibility to build community, even if it means passing up a better job or moving to a nicer area** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Most people can be trusted | -.005 | .021 | .034 |
| Neighbourliness | .158** | .131** | .061 |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with neighbours | -.027 | .034 | .144** |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with family/relatives | .005 | -.020 | -.015 |
| How often you phone/email your neighbours | -.005 | .067 | .124** |
| How often you phone or email family/relatives | .042 | .023 | .038 |
| Membership activity in religious organisation | .120** | .134** | .097** |
| Membership activity in socio-political or community organisation | .093* | .099** | .127** |

*Notes:*
**. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level
*. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

As shown in Table 6, interpersonal trust in relation to civic commitment yielded weak and insignificant results. In contrast, neighbourliness is positively and significantly associated with the responsibility respondents feel towards generally developing their community and to act as a role model, with the former correlation slightly stronger (Tau-B =.158**) than the latter (Tau-B =.131**).[19] The perceived prevalence of trust and reciprocity within the neighbourhood is thus positively related to respondents' sense of commitment towards active participation in community improvement. However, the more demanding the responsibility, the lessened impact which neighbourliness has as a determinant of civic commitment.

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describing 54 percent of the total variance. Reliability testing yielded an Alpha of .6. The correlation analysis was undertaken using the individual items, rather than regressing them to a single construct since each question tests a different parameter of the concept of civic responsibility. In this way we can test for variation in the associations between the dimensions of social capital and each form of civic responsibility.

[19] Recalling the earlier comment that the meaning of 'community' is left open to the respondents, these findings serve as a preliminary indication that respondents understand 'community' to be something related to their neighbourhood.

The impact of neighbourliness diminishes significantly when commitment is spoken about in terms of responsibility to the community which comes at the expense of self-advancement, with a correlation of .061. Face-to-face contact with neighbours has proven to be the most significant and the strongest correlate with this selfless form of civic commitment, with a Tau-B co-efficient of .144**. Phone or email contact with neighbours is also a key determinant here, with a correlation of .124**. It does not suffice that people feel they have good, trusting relations with their neighbours. In order to drive their sense of the responsibility to the community above their own selfish gains, the extent of actual contact with neighbours counts the more. Apart from this, the next strongest determinant is that of formal membership in socio-political or community- based organisations with a correlation co-efficient of .127**. A combination of formal and informal networks based in the context of the neighbourhood or community has the strongest predictive validity in explaining this attitude.

Another important observation relates to the correlation between membership in religious as well as socio-political or community organisations in determining attitudes towards civic commitment generally. In all cases there are positive and significant associations observable, indicating that to some extent formal networks, which played little role in shaping attitude towards diversity, matter in explaining respondents sense of civic responsibility.

Generalised trust is a weak predictor of civic commitment, but associational activism is a positive and statistically significant predictor hereof, leading me to accept the first null hypothesis and reject the second null hypothesis stated in relation to civic commitment. In summary then, when it comes to attitudinal components, it is neighbourly rather than general interpersonal trust which matters more. In terms of structural components, it is a combination of contact with neighbours and membership in religious or socio-political or community based organisations which matters in explaining these attitudes. This is indeed unsurprising since people who have regular interaction with their neighbours are likely to show commitment to their neighbourhood as a way of contributing towards something which they have a connection or attachment to. It is easy to understand the significance of socio-political or community organisations in this regard, since involvement herein often entails taking some sort of civic action in response to the needs of the community whether it be representation in local government or offering social support and charitable services. A combination of both formal and informal networks are at play here and while formal associational activism is predictably key, it is clear that informal norms and associations, which are often overlooked in the study of social capital, are equally as valuable in this regard.

The implications of various facets of social capital are not consistent or steady in any sense. There has been a noted difference in the manner in which various components play a more or less predictive role in shaping attitudes, be it in relation to tolerance of diversity or civic commitment. One consistent pattern however relates specifically to general interpersonal trust which has been offered little in terms of explaining these attitudes.

Having analysed the implications of various facets of social capital on socially beneficial attitudes such as tolerance and civic commitment, my attention will now be focused on various forms of political participation.

# Linking social capital to political participation

## (a) Engagement with local government

Participation in local government was noted to be low, and it is now my intention to test the link between social capital and these outcomes. I will test the hypotheses that *1) interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are positively associated with the extent of political participation.* The corresponding Null hypotheses are that 1) *interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are negatively or not at all associated with the extent of political participation.*

Table 7 shows that social capital does little to explain public participation in local government. [20] Despite the fact that levels of trust and public participation are both low, there is only a weak, moderately significant relationship between generalised trust and writing a letter to the ward councillor. One of the strongest correlation observed, (Tau-B = .178**) is between attendance at a ward meeting and frequency of contact with neighbours. This result suggests that contact with neighbours develops ones sense of commitment to the ward and thus motivates attendance to such a meeting. Attendance at a ward meeting is relatively strongly correlated with membership activity in a socio-political or community groups (Tau-B = .222**). It is likely that some of the organisations captured under this grouping function to secure community welfare and thus members have a vested interest in engaging with Ward Councillors. Trust does little to

[20] In terms of face validity it is clear that these three items are all framed to test the extent of engagement with the local Ward Councillor. The correlations between these three variables, range between Tau-B = .233** - Taub-B = .328**. However, factor analysis yields an Eigen value of just less than 1 and the reliability testing results are weak, with Alpha = .57. While it was never my intention to group or cluster these variables for this analysis, it is clear that the three items are unique indicators of participation with local government and fall slightly shy of being considered a valid and reliable constructs.

explain levels of individual participation with local government, leading me to accept the null hypothesis. In relation to associational activism though, I cannot wholly accept the null, because this variable plays some explanatory role here.

*Table 7. Correlation Table: Association between social capital and engagement with Ward Councillors*

| **Kendall Tau-B Correlations**<br><br>***Social capital in relation to political participation*** | **How often written a letter to the Ward Councillor** | **How often attended public meetings where the Ward Councillor has spoken?** | **How often spoke to the Ward Councillor face-to-face or on the phone?** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Most people can be trusted | .078* | .011 | -.014 |
| Neighbourliness | .009 | -009 | .004 |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with neighbours | -.053 | .055 | .011 |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with family/relatives | -.047 | -.017 | -.009 |
| How often you phone/email your neighbours | .068 | .178** | .071 |
| How often you phone or email family/relatives | .043 | -.020 | .003 |
| Membership activity in religious organization | .010 | -.044 | -.013 |
| Membership activity in socio-political or community organization | .028 | .222** | .082* |

*Notes:*

**. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level

*. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

On this account a combination of formal and informal networks play a role in determining the extent of the individuals participation in local government. From the previous table we noted that these networks were strong predictors of respondents' sense of civic responsibility and it is likely that these results are linked hereto.

It is clear that social capital is weak in explaining the likelihood of ones engagement with Ward Councillors. There is not much to suggest that being a trusting or a non-trusting person, plays any role in determining whether one will be more or less politically active. Clearly there are other social or political variables which might better explain this apathy to engage with Ward Councillors. However, it is not my intention to investigate these paths. The

most compelling finding is that social capital is a weak predictor of engagement with local Ward Councillors. This is in itself a valuable finding and suggests that social capital may not be as strong a determinant of the individuals' propensity to participate in the governance processes, as theory may have anticipated.

## (b) Collective Action

Having made the observation of a weak association between social capital and engagement with Ward Councillors, it is not necessarily the case that social capital functions this way in relation to all forms of political participation and civic activity. To investigate this further, I have at my disposal measures to test the predicative validity of social capital in relation to political participation in terms of various forms of collective action[21].

*Table 8. Correlation Table: Association between social capital and collective action*

| **Kendall Tau-B Correlations**<br><br>***Social capital in relation to political participation*** | Attended a community meeting | Got together with others to raise an issue | Attended a demonstration or protest march | Signed a petition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Most people can be trusted | .022 | -.014 | -.014 | -.002 |
| Neighbourliness | -.031 | -.036 | -.090* | -.035 |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with neighbours | .161** | .055 | .042 | -.121** |
| How often you have face-to-face contact with family/relatives | .009 | .039 | -.013 | .028 |
| How often you phone/email neighbours | .132** | .166** | .112** | .100** |
| You often phone or email family/relatives | -.044 | .047 | .058 | .177** |
| Membership activity in religious organisation | -.009 | .071 | .026 | .036 |
| Membership activity in socio-political or community organisation | .302** | .270** | .249** | .103** |

*Notes*
**. Correlation significant at the 0.01 level
*. Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

[21] As with all the dependent variables, I do not intend to group these variables to form a single construct, since I want to understand the predictive power of social capital in relation to each item. However, I conducted the validity and reliability tests in order to test the quality of the items. These items are strongly correlated with each other, they are reliable (Cronbach Alpha = .72) and cluster to form a factor with an Eigen value of over 1.

It is my intention to test the hypotheses that *1) interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are positively associated with the extent of collective action*. The corresponding Null hypotheses are that *1) interpersonal trust and 2) formal associational activity are negatively or not at all associated with the extent of collective action.*

In Table 8 above, two facets of social capital stand out as strong predictors of political participation. The first is that of membership activity in socio-political or community organisations. This variable yields relatively strong and statistically significant results in relation to respondents' participation in various types of collective activity, and is a particularly strong determinant of attendance at a community meeting (Tau-B =.302**), gathering with others to raise an issue (Tau-B = .270**) as well as attendance a protest march (Tau-B =.249**). The results suggest that these organisations offer citizens opportunities to mobilise together in response to certain issues. The benefits of formalised organisational activity are highlighted in this example and it is likely that these groups have the power to steer collective action and influence policy in a way that informal networks or individuals acting alone, are unable to.

Informal networks with neighbours, particularly as they are sustained through regular e-mail and phone contact goes some way in predicting the likelihood of respondents' participation in these activities. While this is not the strongest determinant, correlations are statistically significant and consistently so, across all four types of political participation. This may be an indication that bonding social capital in the form of neighbourly networks stimulates a heightened interest in the development and welfare of the community.

Regular face-to-face contact with neighbours is a positive and significant determinant of attendance at a community gathering but a negative determinant of signing a petition. Perhaps contact with neighbours motivates other forms of physical interaction with neighbourhood members, such as community meetings, better than it does less interactive endeavours such as the signing of a petition.

Kin-related variables play little role in determining these outcomes. Only a single positive and significant relationship was observed between phone/e-mail contact with kin and likelihood of signing a petition (Tau-B = .177**). It might be that interaction with family and relatives sometimes involves the deliberation of political issues which my lead to public participation, but minimally so.

Trust plays no role in predicting participation in group-focused collective action, thus I accept the null hypothesis. Associational activism did however play a role in explaining these activities, leading me to reject the null hypothesis here.

There are indications that citizens take preference to engaging in political and civic activity which takes place on a collective rather than solitary scale. Furthermore, social capital is a stronger predictor of collective action such as signing a petition or joining a protest march than it is of individual activities such as phoning or writing to the Ward Councillor. In this regard it is a combination of formal and informal networks which help explain people's willingness and actual involvement in various types of group-centred civic activity. Attitudinal variables played virtually no role in explaining these outcomes and it is clear that structural components capturing interaction with others does more to drive public participation, than citizens' attitudes and perceptions about trust.

# 5. Conclusion

The social capital literature and empirical analysis is often dominated by an over-riding emphasis on the general trust variable. In Cape Town however, this variable has held little relevance in explaining the outcomes of tolerance of diversity, civic commitment and political participation. Indeed, by breaking social capital down into various dimensions, we have gained a more acute view of the relationship between these dimensions as they affect certain democratic outcomes that are theoretically derived from general interpersonal trust.

Both interpersonal trust and associational activism do far less to explain attitudes towards diversity than theory suggests these should. This may be attributed to our lack of insight into how respondents shape their views on trust as well as the fact that associational involvement is predominantly in religious groups, which remain racially homogenous in Cape Town. Neighbourliness is a positive and statistically significant predictor of tolerance towards diversity, but regular contact with neighbours implicates negatively hereon, suggesting that this form of bonding social capital generates negative attitudes towards outsiders.

While generalised trust is a weak predictor of civic commitment, associational activism is a positive and statistically significant predictor hereof. Neighbourliness explains more accurately respondents' sense of responsibility to develop the community as well as act as a role model. However, it is regular interaction and contact with neighbours which is the strongest determinant of whether respondents are willing to place their civic responsibility above their own needs. Clearly bonding social capital here functions for the benefit of narrower, community-focused issues, quite opposite to its implications on more broadly favoured social attitudes such as tolerance of diversity in Cape Town. Formal networks of association such as those developed through membership in

religious and socio-political and community-based groups, implicate positively on respondents sense of civic commitment. This suggests that participation in associations motivates a willingness to take an active rather than passive role in satisfying the developmental goals of the democracy.

Social capital does little to explain levels of individual participation in local government activity. Thus, despite the fact that generalised trust and associational activism are both low in Cape Town, these variables do not suffice to adequately explain the public's apathy to engage with local government. Political participation in the form of group activities is best explained by a combination of informal and formal networks, where respondents who are active in associations as well as those who have frequent contact with their neighbours are more likely to participate as citizens in the democracy. These network interactions may well be generating a sense of allegiance to the community and thus motivate active participation in the policy and governance process.

The Cape Area Study 2003 has served as a vehicle for exploring and analysing the dimensions and implications of social capital as it relates to variables important for both the civic culture and developmental goals. By analysing social capital as a multidimensional concept, I have made inferences about the unique effect of each facet in a manner which is unusual but crucial for the development of this field of study. What is unusual about this approach is that rather than resting the analysis of attitudes on interpersonal trust only and our analysis of networks on associational membership only, I sought to explore other facets and then understand the manner in which they affect certain social and political attitudes and behaviours. The implications of social capital differ by dimension and situation, be it in relation to society generally or to the neighbourhood. It is clear that social capital is not only multi-faceted but a situation specific variable, and future endeavours to study the concept within the framework of quantitative political science stand to gain by building on this understanding of the concept.

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# Appendix A

## Variable Recodes and Summary Statistics

For the validity and reliability testing as well as correlation analyses, variables were recoded for consistency in the directionality of the measures. This was to ensure that for all the items, a higher score meant 'more' social capital, in terms of what the item is measuring.

All 'Don't Know' responses were recorded as Missing. Missing variables were dropped from factor, reliability and correlation analyses.

***Recodes : Independent Variables***

*General Trust Variable*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Strongly agree | 1 = Strongly disagree |
| 2 = Agree | 2 = Disagree |
| 3 = Neither | 3 = Neither |
| 4 = Disagree | 4 = Agree |
| 5 = Strongly disagree | 5 = Strongly agree |

*Neighbourly Trust Variables*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Strongly agree | 1 = Strongly disagree |
| 2 = Agree | 2 = Disagree |
| 3 = Neither | 3 = Neither |
| 4 = Disagree | 4 = Agree |
| 5 = Strongly disagree | 5 = Strongly agree |

*Face-to-face contact with 1) Family and Relatives and 2) Neighbours*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Everyday | 1 = Less than several times a year |
| 2 = Several times a week | 2 = Several times a year |
| 3 = Several times a month | 3 = Several times a month |
| 4 = Several times a year | 4 = Several times a week |
| 5 = Less than several times a year | 5 = Everyday |

*Phone/Email contact with 1) Family and Relatives and 2) Neighbours*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Everyday | 1 = Less than several times a year |
| 2 = Several times a week | 2 = Several times a year |
| 3 = Several times a month | 3 = Several times a month |
| 4 = Several times a year | 4 = Several times a week |
| 5 = Less than several times a year | 5 = Everyday |

*Associational Activity*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Leader | 1 = Not a member |
| 2 = Active Member | 2 = Inactive member |
| 3 = Inactive Member | 3 = Active member |
| 4 = Not a member | 4 = Leader |

***Recodes: Dependent Variables***

Similarly the aim was to be consistent in the directionality of the dependent variables, such that for the dependent variables the higher the, score the more positive the outcome of social capital.

*Tolerance of Diversity Variables*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Strongly agree | 1 = Strongly disagree |
| 2 = Agree | 2 = Disagree |
| 3 = Neither | 3 = Neither |
| 4 = Disagree | 4 = Agree |
| 5 = Strongly disagree | 5 = Strongly agree |

*Civic Commitment Variables*

| Original Format | Recoded Format |
|---|---|
| 1 = Strongly agree | 1 = Strongly disagree |
| 2 = Agree | 2 = Disagree |
| 3 = Neither | 3 = Neither |
| 4 = Disagree | 4 = Agree |
| 5 = Strongly disagree | 5 = Strongly agree |

*Political Participation: Engagement with local government variables*

Original Format : unchanged

1 = No, never
2 = Yes, once
3 = Yes, a few times
4 = Yes, many times

*Political Participation : Collective action variables*

Original Format : unchanged

1 = No, never
2 = No, but would if I had a chance
3 = Yes, once
4 = Yes, often

***Summary Statistics : Independent Variables***

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max | % Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Trust | 584 | 2.67 | 1.18 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Neighbours Helpful | 573 | 3.74 | 0.93 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Neighbours stop break-in | 568 | 3.90 | 0.93 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Neighbours watch your house | 575 | 3.93 | 0.91 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Visit/Speak to neighbours | 585 | 3.88 | 1.45 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Phone/Email neighbours | 582 | 1.60 | 1.18 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Visit/Speak to fam/relatives | 587 | 3.99 | 1.06 | 1 | 5 | < 1% |
| Phone/Email fam/relatives | 588 | 3.20 | 1.46 | 1 | 5 | 0 % |
| Active-Religious Org. | 586 | 2.29 | 0.89 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Trade Union | 564 | 1.20 | 0.57 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Prof./Bus. Assoc. | 564 | 1.13 | 0.49 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Community Org. | 571 | 1.38 | 0.78 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Local self-help Org. | 568 | 1.27 | 0.62 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Neighbourhood watch | 568 | 1.20 | 0.55 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Local Group, PTA etc | 573 | 1.21 | 0.58 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Sports Club | 566 | 1.40 | 0.80 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Another social club | 571 | 1.20 | 0.57 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Political party | 570 | 1.26 | 0.59 | 1 | 4 | < 1% |
| Active-Other | 23 | 2.52 | 0.85 | 1 | 4 | 96 % |

***Summary Statistics : Dependent Variables***

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max | % Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Easy to like 'different' people | 582 | 4.00 | 0.93 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Exposure-other cultures enriches life | 574 | 4.00 | 0.97 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Desirable to create one community | 559 | 3.63 | 1.12 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Responsibility-give time to community | 570 | 4.00 | 0 .82 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Responsibility-act as role model | 577 | 4.15 | 0.79 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Responsibility-stay and help build | 563 | 3.22 | 1.21 | 1 | 5 | <1% |
| Spoken to Ward Councillor | 543 | 1.27 | 0.67 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Written letter to Ward Councillor | 574 | 1.07 | 0.35 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Attended public meeting | 578 | 1.34 | 0.80 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Attended community meeting | 586 | 2.20 | 1.15 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Raised an issue with others | 586 | 1.82 | 1.02 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Attended demonstration | 586 | 1.53 | 0.87 | 1 | 4 | <1% |
| Signed a petition | 586 | 1.81 | 1.00 | 1 | 4 | <1% |