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Social Capital: Implications for Human Service Organizations and Child Welfare

Salvador Montana, PhD

Introduction

This study explores the concept of social capital in human service organizations using secondary data. Although not entirely void of empirical examination, most analysis of social capital remains theoretical and is examined in the context of societies or communities (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998) or individual benefits derived from membership in a social network (Boxman, DeGraaf, & Flap, 1991; Burt, 1997). Limitation in empirical work is largely due to problems of definition and measurement of the concept. Although a conceptual empirical research examining social capital in private organizations is emerging, there is a relative paucity of social capital research in human service organizations. This study explores salient features of social capital as it may exist in a public human service organization providing child welfare services and examines any relationships social capital may have to the organizational constructs of work motivation and job satisfaction.

Social capital is similar to many of the principles associated with social and organizational learning that are thought to improve motivation and job satisfaction among workers and are linked to organizational performance. Market forces and the knowledge-intensive economy have motivated private for-profit organizations to use a social capital framework for instituting organizational change for the purpose of gaining organizational advantage in the market (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Public sector organizations are generally more bureaucratic, and market forces play a lesser role in motivating these organizations toward continuous improvement. Changes directed at improvement in the public sector are often reactive to some public demand, rather than proactive.

Examination of social capital in public human services organizations may be one framework for improving the operations and the practices of these organizations. In general, the literature suggests that public human service organizations, including child welfare, still subscribe to a rigid bureaucratic paradigm for production of human services. Many believe this contributes to the difficulties found in the nation's child welfare system. Hierarchy, specialization, control, and rigidity are some of the characteristics of bureaucracy that lead to lower job satisfaction, poor morale, and less commitment among child welfare workers (Arches, 1991; Esposito & Fine, 1986; Ewalt, 1991; Reagh, 1994; Samantrai, 1992). Negative perceptions of work and job often set the stage for a worker's intention to leave or for staff turnover (Freund, 2005; Jaskyte, 2003; McNeely, 1992; Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001). Staff turnover in child welfare services is particularly problematic because it jeopardizes the ability of the agency to protect and safeguard the well-being of children (Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, 2005; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001; Samantrai, 1992). Social capital theory may be one approach to reworking the bureaucratic paradigm consistent with Quality of Work Life (Camman, 1984; Gowdy, 1988), and social and organizational learning perspectives (Cohen, 2004; Cook and Yanow, 1996; Lauderdale, 1999) thought to improve organizational life.

Literature Review

In the last 30 years or so, social capital has received much attention in contemporary literature across a variety of disciplines such as economics, management, organizational science, political science, and more recently social work (Gummer, 1998; Livermore & Neustrom, 2003; Sherraden, 1991). Like many concepts and perspectives in their infancy, conceptualizations and definitions of social capital are numerous (Adler & Kwon 2002). In general, social capital can be described as resources embedded in a network of relationships that are available to individuals, organizations, communities, and societies for

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both individual and collective benefit. (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). Although, theorists and researchers find social capital useful for explaining the nature and the benefits of social relationships in networks across a variety of settings, some have questioned the worthiness of the concept. Differences in conceptualization, the lack of uniformity in definition, and its broad application across a number of settings have put its heuristic and scientific value under severe stress (Portes, 1998). The idea of social capital is not new and some would argue that social capital is new language for the old idea that "connections" matter, and has always been in plain view for those choosing to notice (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Despite these unresolved issues and doubts about social capital, some feel there is potential in the concept to bring together a number of previously independently studied concepts -- such as social exchange, social networks, and social resources -- into a more unified approach to inquiry (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

A major feature of social capital is its set of normative qualities, of which *trust* is foremost. Cohen and Prusak (2001) state, "Social capital depends on trust" (p. 29). Discussions of social capital and trust are often fused or implicit making it difficult to ascertain whether they are one and the same concept (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998); however, many view trust as a distinct concept. For example, Coleman (1988) frames trust as one's faith in the performance of the social structure in terms of reliability, utility, and repayment of obligations. Similarly, Adler and Kwon (2000) view trust as a psychological state in relation to structure and relationships. For Burt (1992), trust equates to confidence in the person sharing the relationship, as in information exchanges, personal competence, and performance of duties. For Burt, it is not a matter of trust, but whom to trust. Other norms -- such as reciprocity, obligations, honesty, and cooperation -- are often intertwined in discussions of social capital and trust.

The benefits of social capital include the access, ease of transfer, and quality of information, which are precursors of learning, and knowledge (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1998; Lin, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Sandefur & Laumann, 1998; Woolcock, 1998). Information also functions as the basis for mobilization and action (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Intertwined with information and often used interchangeably are learning and knowledge. Although similar, information is mainly associated with the communication of facts, data, or ideas, while learning is most associated with insight and conclusions drawn from thinking about information. Knowledge is mostly associated with higher levels of cognition directed at awareness, comprehension, understanding, and ideas.

Social capital possesses both collective and individual benefits, often stressed separately by different authors. At opposite ends of this collective and individual benefit continuum are Coleman (1988) and Burt (1997). Coleman stresses the benefits of social capital to all members of the social structure while Burt emphasizes personal opportunities created as a result of social capital. Social capital's collective benefit is referred to as the *public good*, while the individual benefit is referred to as the *private good.* The public good of social capital emphasizes the communal gains or rewards obtained by social units, such as family, community, or an organization (Pearce & Randel, 2004). The private good of social capital centers on how individuals access and use resources from the social network for personal gain, such as job attainment and promotion, increasing earning and economic status, and social prestige (Fernandez & Castilla, 2001; Flap & Völker, 2001; Lin, 2001). Putnam (2000) believes that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and that individual and collective benefits are complimentary and exist simultaneously.

The structural properties of social capital are often presented as *bonding* or *bridging* (Lin. 2001; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004; Putnam, 2000). The bonding aspect of social capital draws from the work of Coleman (1998, 1990), and his idealization of network closure. For social capital to work and possess value, social networks must be dense and contain strong ties that bond members based on normative qualities (trust, reciprocity, and loyalty). Therefore, net-

work members concentrate on building and maintaining ties internally with other members of the network. In effect, closure creates the right conditions for solidarity, and the pursuit of collective goals. Boundaries are clear and defined. To members, the social structure is seen as a highly resourceful and productive entity. Bridging is connecting across to other networks to acquire new or different resources. Those who espouse the bridging feature of social capital have built on the work of Granovetter (1973) and his demonstration of the *strength of weak ties* (meaning external ties) to secure benefits. Bridging requires individuals to concentrate on building and maintaining external contacts that provide richer opportunities not found in the members' immediate network. These external ties are generally more heterogeneous than those found in network closure (Burt, 2001).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) provide a useful framework for social capital in organization based on the knowledge-based theory of the firm. The origins of knowledge-based theory of the firm stem from thinking and analysis concerning how a firm can best compete in a modern global economy fueled by information, knowledge, and new technologies, rather than traditional resources of labor, land, and other physical goods (Lesser, 2001). In a modern economy, the organization's (firm) best assets are its knowledge resources, competencies, abilities, and capabilities (Barney, 1996; Conner & Prahalad, 1996; Hoffman, Hoelscher, & Sheriff, 2005). Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998) framework is often used by theorists and researchers to examine how social capital may function in organizations (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; King, 2004; Lesser & Cothel, 2004; Lesser & Storck, 2004; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Their framework contains four primary elements which are: 1) intellectual capital, 2) exchange and combination, 3) three dimensions of social capital in organizations and 4) factors that shape the creation of social capital.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) refer to an organization's knowledge as *intellectual capital*, which they define as the "knowledge and knowing capacity of a social collectivity" (p.245). Their notion of intellectual capital is that learning and knowledge is a collective enterprise or is social knowledge, as opposed to the sum of individual knowledge. This implies that as individuals leave the organization, their knowledge remains with the collective and that collective knowledge is greater and more productive than any knowledge possessed by a single individual. In their second element of their framework, Nahapiet and Ghoshal postulate that individual knowledge creates intellectual capital through *exchange* and *combination*. Exchange is different parties sharing their knowledge and experiences through social relationships and interactions. When knowledge is exchanged, new combinations of knowledge occur creating new ideas and knowledge or intellectual capital (Moran & Ghoshal, 1996).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) believe that social capital creates opportunities and conditions for exchange and combination through three dimensions: structural, cognitive, and relational. These three dimensions of social capital are interdependent, relational, and mutually reinforcing. The *structural* dimension refers to the overall pattern of relationships found in an organization. The *cognitive* dimension is concerned with how information and knowledge in an organization is transmitted, understood, and eventually shaped into intellectual capital or social knowledge. The *relationship dimension* refers to the quality of the relationships between members based on normative features such as trust, reciprocity, obligations, and group identification. The factors or conditions necessary for creating superior levels of social capital in organizations are time, interdependence, interaction, and closure. These features are similar to Coleman's (1988) descriptions of social capital.

Leana and Van Buren (1999) have defined and coined the term *organizational social capital*, which is consistent with Nahapiet's and Ghoshal's (1998) framework. They view social capital as a desired feature of organizations in which the quality of social relations among members is seen as a key to unlocking assets in the organization. Organizational leaders must make active and calculated investments in robust social networks in order to create the feelings of community and shared understanding (social knowledge) that will drive coherent organizational behavior.

Again, these social relationships are characterized by normative features such as trust, reciprocity, cooperation, shared identity, and collective goal orientation. These, in turn, facilitate information sharing, knowledge, and collective action.

These descriptions in the literature suggest that social capital in organizations can best be described as investments made by organizational leaders and members to foster relationships and shared understanding using social structure and normative features, such as trust, reciprocity, and cooperation, which allow the full potential of an organization's knowledge and other resources to be accessed and used for collective action toward organizational goals.

The literature implies that social capital can improve an organization's competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is linked to the concept of organizational performance, a concept more familiar to human service organizations. Public human service organizations pursue more efficient and effective organizational performance based on other salient elements found in the environment in addition to competitiveness, such as public policy, accountability, laws and regulations, service outcomes, fiscal responsibility, and public support for its activities and services. Examination of the concept of social capital and its salient features may offer additional insight for improving organizational life and culture among workers beyond the entrenched bureaucratic paradigm, and the knowledge gained through such an examination may advance organizational performance, including public child welfare organizations.

The research questions explored in this study were:

1. What are the primary qualities and characteristics of social capital that would support an operationalization of the concept in a public human service/child welfare organization?
2. Are perceptions of social capital related to worker's perception of motivation and job satisfaction?

Methodology

The literature reviewed for this study supports organizational social capital as a multidimensional concept. To investigate the multidimensionality of social capital and an operationalization of the concept, organizational assessment data archived by the Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE) located at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work, were analyzed using factor analysis. If factors indicative of social capital were found, analyses of relationships between factors and worker motivation and job satisfaction would be performed using multiple regressions.

The SOE survey is divided into five sections containing 122 items. The first section contains primarily demographic items. The remaining four sections measure organizational constructs (i.e., team effectiveness and diversity), compensation and training, organization-wide issues, such as mission and relationships with other organizations, and customized items if desired by an agency. Data in these four sections are collected using a Likert scale with the following responses for each item: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Feel Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree and 6) Don't Know/Not Applicable.

The study's population and unit of analysis were employees of the former Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS). The DPRS was a large public human service organization with over 6,000 employees statewide. Due to a reorganization in Texas State government, DPRS was consolidated under the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and renamed the Department of Family and Protective Services. These data collected at the time of this study do not reflect this consolidation; however, these data were the most recent at the time of the study. The DPRS data set used for this study was for the period from September 1, 2003, through August 31, 2004. Like many public human service organizations across the country, the DPRS provided other human services in addition to child welfare; however, 72% of the employees in this study identified their work roles as related to child welfare services (prevention, protective, care, and supervision). The DPRS mission was to protect children, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations from abuse and neglect. A total of

6,308 surveys were distributed to all employees through the organization's mail system. Employees also had the option of completing the survey online. All employees' responses were anonymous. For the study year, 4,006 were returned for a return rate of 63.1 percent.

Twenty (20) SOE items from DPRS 2003/2004 data were selected as variables, that is, as items for exploring the concept of organizational social capital. The selection criteria for the items were based on salient qualities and characteristics of the concept found in the literature, primarily from the works of Coleman (1989), Leana and Van Buren (1999) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), among others, that reasonably represented some aspect of social capital in organizations. The twenty items thought to meet these criteria are listed on Table 1.

Similarly, several SOE items were evaluated as indicators of motivation and job satisfaction. Motivation and job satisfaction have long being studied in the organizational literature and although related, they are generally considered two different constructs (Wright, 2001). Five SOE items were selected as indicators of motivation and reflected intrinsic qualities often associated with worker motivation, such as challenging work, self-actualization, recognition, social approval, and opportunities for growth (Herzberg, 1975; Locke and Latham, 1990; Maslow, 1954; Wright, 2001). Six SOE items were selected as indicators of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is described as a psychological state (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Flap & Völker, 2001; Locke, 1976) reflecting whether an employee likes the job based on work characteristics, such as level of match between worker skills and job task, level of decision-making, availability of resources, adequate time to task, and stressors associated with job (Brass, 1981; Person & Chong, 2001; Saari & Judge, 2004). SOE items selected as indicators of motivation and job satisfaction.

To investigate the multidimensionality of social capital and an operationalization of the concept, data were analyzed using factor analysis. Kreuger and Newman (2006) state that in trying to assess the relationship among several indica-

Table 1: 20 SOE Items Selected for Factor Analysis

Item #	Item #
3: Our goals are consistently met or exceeded.	36: Training is made available to us so that we can do our jobs better.
9: Every employee is valued.	41: Within my workplace, there is a feeling of community.
14: The right information gets to the right people at the right time.	45: We balance our focus on both long range and short goals.
15: We integrate information and act intelligently upon that information.	48: Work groups are actively involved in making work processes more effective.
16: The work atmosphere encourages open and honest communication.	49. The people I work with treat each other with respect.
17: We feel the channels we must go through at work are reasonable.	52: Our employees are generally ethical in the workplace.
20: We have an opportunity to participate in the goal setting process.	76: Information and knowledge are shared openly within this organization.
22: We seem to be working toward the same goals.	81: We understand the state, local, national, and global issues that impact the organization.
23: There is basic trust among employees and supervisors.	82: We know how our work impacts others in the organization.
29: There is a real feeling of team work.	84: I have a good understanding of our mission, vision and strategic plan.

Table 2: 11 SOE Items Indicating Motivation and Job Satisfaction Selected for Factor Analysis

5 Items for Motivation Item #	6 Items for Job Satisfaction Item #
25: We feel a sense of pride when we tell people that we work for this organization.	21: Decision-making and control are given to employees doing the actual work.
28: Outstanding work is recognized.	24: We are given the opportunity to do our best work.
30: We feel our efforts count.	32: We have adequate resources to do our jobs.
31: We are encouraged to learn from our mistakes.	42: The environment supports a balance between work and personal life.
33: We are given accurate feedback about our performance.	43: The pace of the work in this organization enables me to do a good job.
	44: My job meets my expectations.

tors to reveal a hypothetical concept, the appropriate method is factor analysis. Further, Springer, Abell, and Hudson (2002) recommend an exploratory factor analysis approach when the literature offers little support for the psychometric properties of the concept. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) state that exploratory factor analysis is associated with theory development and for exploring an operational definition of a concept using observed variable items. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the variable items loading on a factor. Other organizational concepts being explored in this study, motivation and job satisfaction, also underwent factor analysis using the variable items identified earlier. Once the factor structures were revealed, factors were converted into new variables to examine the relationship of social capital to motivation and job satisfaction using standard multiple regression. Standard multiple regression is the appropriate analysis when trying to assess or explore the relationship among variables, versus other regression strategies more appropriate for hypothesis testing. (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Findings

The review of the literature suggests that social capital consists of highly interrelated and interdependent dimensions that reflect normative, structural, and cognitive qualities. Exploratory factor analysis using an oblique rotation was selected since this method tests for correlations among derived factors. Table 3 displays the result of the factor analysis used to examine organizational social capital.

After all diagnostics were performed, the final factor solution revealed three underlying factors. Eight (8) variables items loaded onto factor one, two variable items loaded onto factor two, and four variable items loaded onto factor three. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest that correlations > 0.32 are adequate to suggest relationships among factors. Table 4 shows the results of the factor correlation matrix and the matrix revealed a relationship among all factors > 0.32.

Findings from the factor analysis suggest two underlying dimensions of social capital using these data. Items loading onto factor one reflect structure, information, and cognitive qualities of social capital found in the literature. Factor two is represented by two variable items. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) state that "interpretation of factors defined by only one or two variables is hazardous…under even the most exploratory factor analysis." (p.622) Items loading on factor three appear normative in nature, reflecting how members feel about others in the workplace. The factor correlation matrix (Table 4) shows that factor one and factor three possessed the highest correlation, which seemingly connects the normative qualities of social capital with other qualities of the concept represented in factor one.

Table 3: Pattern Matrix

SOE Items	Factors 1	2	3
14	.791		
15	.751		
17	.674		
20	.669		
22	.642		
48	.573		
45	.536		
9	.526		
81		.767	
82		.725	
41			.757
49			.747
29			.650
23	.375		.525

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, $p < 001$.

Table 4: Factor Correlation Matrix for Final Factor Analysis Solution for Social Capital

Factor	1	2	3
1	---		
2	.571	----	
3	.651	.384	----

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, $p = 001$.

Table 5: Summaries of Component Matrices Factor Loadings for Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Motivation: Component 1		Job Satisfaction: Component 1	
SOE Items	Loadings	SOE Items	Loadings
28	.832	43	.854
30	.830	44	.835
33	.819	24	.794
31	.774	42	.781

Notes. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, $p = .001$ for each analysis.

Given the limitations of secondary data, these early findings appear to support social capital as a multidimensional concept as theorized in the literature. The interpretation, decision, and naming of factors is risky; however, it seems plausible that factors one and three are reasonable indicators of the concept. Because the interpretation of a factor with two variable loadings is hazardous, it was dropped from further analysis. Factor one is referred to as *general social capital characteristics* and factor three is referred to as *normative qualities linked to social capital.* Factor one and factor three were tested for internal consistency (reliability) using Cronbach's Alpha. Alpha values greater than 0.60 are considered adequate for internal consistency in exploratory research. Alpha for factor one = 0.8910, (N= 3466) and Alpha for factor three = 0.8542, (N = 3885.)

SOE variable items selected to operationalize the organizational concepts of motivation and job satisfaction were analyzed using Principle Component Analysis (PCA) with orthogonal rotation (varimax). PCA maximizes the total variance (common and unique) of variables allowing for better summarization of the relationship between variables thought to indicate a unidimensional concept. Four variable items loaded onto one factor for motivation and four variable items loaded onto one factor for job satisfactions. Table 5 displays the results of the factor analysis used for motivation and job satisfaction.

Variable items loading on each factor (motivation and job satisfaction) were tested for internal consistency (reliability) using Cronbach's Alpha. Alpha for variable items loading on component one for motivation = 0.8282, (N= 3848) and Alpha for variable items loading on component one for job satisfaction = 0.8254 (N = 3904).

Factors scores were weighted to create new variables for social capital using scores from pattern matrix. Factors scores taken from the component matrices were also weighted to create operational variables for motivation and job satisfaction. Standard multiple regression was selected as the method to assess the relationship between social capital and motivation and job satisfaction.

Table 6 provides the results of the standard multiple regression used to assess the relationship between the dependent variable motivation and the variables general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital. The variable general social capital characteristics did possess missing data greater than 5%, but *t*-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between cases with missing and valid data.

The Multiple R (.843) indicated that the overall relationship between dependent variable motivation and the variables, general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital, was very strong and statistically significant, $F(2,3037) = 3732.47$, $p < 0.001$. The model accounted for 71.1% of the variance (R^2) in motivation. The examination of individual relations between variables (B coefficients) indicated that the variables, general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital, had a direct relationship with the dependent variable motivation that was statistically sig-

Table 6: Model Summary: Standard Multiple Regression for Motivation, (N = 3040)
General Social Capital Characteristics = GSCC
Normative Qualities Linked to Social Capital = NQLSC

Model 1.	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	F	p	df
	.843	.711	.711	3732.47	< .001	2
Coefficients		B	β	t	p	
GSCC		.391	.552	40.204	<.001	
NQLSC		.414	.358	26.058	<.001	

Table 7: Model Summary: Standard Multiple Regression for Job Satisfaction, (N = 3399)
General Social Capital Characteristics = GSCC
Normative Qualities Linked to Social Capital = NQLSC

Model 1.	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	F	p	df
	.752	.556	.556	2214.46	< .001	2
Coefficients		B	β	T	p	
GSCC		.431	.558	37.448	<.001	
NQLSC		.254	.214	13.601	<.001	

nificant ($p \leq 0.05$). Higher scores for the variables representing social capital were associated with higher scores for the variable motivation.

Table 7 provides the results of the standard multiple regression used to assess the relationship between the dependent variable job satisfaction and the variables general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital. The variable general social capital characteristics did possess missing data greater than 5%, but *t*-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between cases with missing and valid data.

The Multiple R (.752) indicated that the overall relationship between dependent variable job satisfaction and the variables, general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital, was strong and statistically significant, $F(2,3396) = 2214.46$, $p < 0.001$. The model accounted for 55.6% of the variance (R^2) in job satisfaction. The examination of individual relations between variables (B coefficients) indicated that the variables, general social capital characteristics and normative qualities linked to social capital, had a direct relationship with the dependent variable job satisfaction that was statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Higher scores for the variables representing social capital were associated with higher scores for variable job satisfaction.

Discussion

The results of the factor analysis reflect a range of characteristics often associated with social capital. Social capital is said to lubricate the flow, exchange, and use of information and is seen as a precursor to organizational learning and social knowledge. The items loading onto factor one, general social capital characteristics, reflect social capital characteristics of shared understanding and perception of the organization, goal setting, collective benefit, information flow, and structure that allows for interaction among peers to perform work. Taken together these items emphasize the public-good quality of social capital, which drives collective action.

The items loading onto factor three, normative qualities linked to social capital, reflect principles and values important to group interaction and the production of work, such as trust, respectfulness, solidarity, and identity and purpose. Normative qualities may also indicate strength of network closure and boundaries, level of agreement to tasks, and propensity for collective action. The results of the factor- correlation matrix (Table 4) suggest that normative qualities are linked to factor one, general characteristics of social capital. This lends support to social capital as a multidimensional concept, in which dimensions reinforce each other or are symbiotic in nature.

The results of the multiple regression analyses suggest that social capital has a positive relationship with motivation and job satisfaction. Obviously, more valid and reliable measures are needed to state this conclusion with certainty, but these results provide some evidence of a positive relationship. If social capital does represent what Burt (1997) describes as *network organizations*, which are characterized by greater access, participation, engagement, social knowledge, and social

connectedness, then it seems plausible that some workers would find these conditions stimulating, which could lead to greater motivation and job satisfaction. This may be especially true for professional classifications of workers who may desire more opportunities to demonstrate and expand their professional knowledge and skills in a participatory and engaging way with peers. Greater workplace engagement and creation of social knowledge may simultaneously operate to satisfy intrinsic needs and reinforce positive attitudes about the job.

Concerns about worker motivation and job satisfaction are paramount in many public human service organizations. However, public child welfare agencies are particularly impacted because staffs in these agencies often complain of poor morale and low job satisfaction due to overly bureaucratic work (Arches, 1991; Cohen & Austin, 1994; Esposito & Fine, 1985; Reagh, 1994; Samantrai, 1992; Rycraft, 1994; Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006). Overly bureaucratic structures create the feeling that clients not being helped, that workers are isolated and lack support, that workers have too much responsibility with little authority, that there is an emphasis on paperwork and reporting, too many rules and procedures, and that there is no way to use and demonstrate professional knowledge and expertise Many of these factors are contrary to the intrinsic needs of workers and may cause the formation of negative attitudes toward work. Predictably, many knowledgeable and experienced workers leave the agency, which in turn affects the quality of services and organizational performance. Leaders in public child welfare organizations may want to consider the principles and ideas associated with social capital as a way to improve motivation and job satisfaction, which may help to mitigate staff turnover.

Efforts to reform child welfare are evolving on many fronts, such as new federal and state policies, court litigation, and infusion of best practices. One major reform initiative directed at professionalizing the child welfare workforce is Title IV-E education and training. These federal and state funded education and training programs professionalize the workforce through university-based curriculum and instruction. An assumption of these programs is that specialized knowledge or knowledge-work is needed to improve child welfare services and outcomes. However, the return on these large investments in human capital will be limited unless greater attention is paid to diffusion of knowledge directed at creating social knowledge within these organizations (Balfour & Neff, 1993, Herie & Garth, 2002; Reid, 2002). Subramaniam and Youndt (2005) suggest that organizations that rely heavily on human capital for performance and ignore social capital do not realize the full potential of their employees. The ideas and principles associated with organizational social capital are thought to support and facilitate knowledge dissemination and create what Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) called the intellectual capital or social knowledge of the organization. From this perspective, social capital has the potential to create a new organizational culture that better supports workers' application and transfer of learned skills, knowledge, and expertise throughout the agency. Opportunities for exchange and recombination create not only new social knowledge, but also creativity and innovation based on new social knowledge. This is particularly important given the heterogeneous, multifaceted, and complicated problems faced by families coming to these agencies.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was the large number of cases used in regression analyses, which results in small differences being statistically significant. This would warrant caution in concluding the extent or presence of differences. Another limitation was the use of secondary data for operationalizing and measuring concepts for which these data were not intended. Rubin and Babbie (2005) note this limitation of secondary data by stating that data collected for one purpose may not precisely measure the constructs used in a different study. The issue becomes whether the original data come close to being a valid indicator for constructs used in other research. The potential for unintended biases and the use of secondary data call for caution in the interpretation of all findings and conclusions presented. Lastly, there is no attempt to generalize beyond the pub-

lic human service organization selected for this study.

Future Research

This exploratory study generated a number of questions and unresolved issues that could be used to guide future research. First, future research should undertake development of valid and reliable measures of social capital in organizations based on a more uniform definition of the concept. If problems of measurement can be overcome, then research should evaluate the multidimensionality of social capital. Future research will need to clarify whether social capital functions as an antecedent or a consequence. For example, are higher levels of motivation a consequence of social capital or vise versa? Future research should develop and test a model of social capital specific to human services organizations. More rigorous studies can then be designed to measure its relationship to concepts associated with organizational life and whether or not social capital is a viable way of organizing and coordinating work, especially in the context of child welfare work. Lastly, future research should address the question: is too much social capital in organizations problematic? Some theorist have suggested that too much closure and bonding have potentially negative costs for organizations, such as shutting out new ideas or members who overly conform to group norms.

Conclusion

Adler and Kwon (2002) suggest that social capital may be emerging as an "umbrella concept, whose ideas and notions are found in other organizational theories and perspectives that have been previously studied." (p.18). Of course this is far from certain, but many of the organizational perspectives described historically in the literature -- such as quality of work life (QWL), social learning, organizational learning, the enabling bureaucracy, the empowering organization, and workplace social inclusion --denote similarities of less bureaucracy and greater social connectedness similar to social capital. Each of these perspectives alters the bureaucratic paradigm and suggests greater motivation and job satisfaction among workers. Whether or not there is a unifying concept, this study suggests that certain aspects and characteristics of social capital may be related to worker's perceptions about motivation and job satisfaction. Although not tested in this study, the literature suggests that social capital has implications for social knowledge of an organization. It is this social knowledge and its connectedness to organizational life derived form social capital that may be of most interest to organizational leaders as they evaluate and ponder their organizational performance.

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