

Internet, mass media and social capital

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Outline

Internet, mass
media and social
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Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

- ▶ Motivation and Existing evidence
 - ▶ Social capital
 - ▶ Social capital vs online technologies
- ▶ Project proposal
 - ▶ Questions
 - ▶ Variables
 - ▶ Data
 - ▶ Method

Social capital (SC)

- ▶ a set of resources accumulated from the relationship among members of a social context or network (Putnam, 2000)
- ▶ in the form of trust and civic cooperation, as a catalyst of economic interactions – > positive impact on well-being and economic growth (Knack and Keefer (1997), Beugelsdijk et al., 2004).
- ▶ quality of the relationships among people – > predominant impact on well-being (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004, Helliwell, 2006, Bruni and Stanca, 2008, Becchetti et al., 2008).
- ▶ social relationships - a shelter from different forms of distress; stronger social networks – > longer and healthier lives (Berkman and Syme (1979), Jemmott and Locke, 1984).

Social capital vs online technologies?

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media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

- ▶ The sustainable growth strategy (Europe 2020) emphasizes *development of online technologies*
- ▶ ..proliferation of internet; new face of mass-media; extensive use of Social Networking Sites (SNS)...
- ▶ Digital media – > possibly reshaping people's attitudes towards relating to others; – > **social capital is affected** (e.g. Gil de Zanuiga et al 2012).
- ▶ There are optimistic and pessimistic views...

Social capital vs online technologies?

Internet, mass
media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

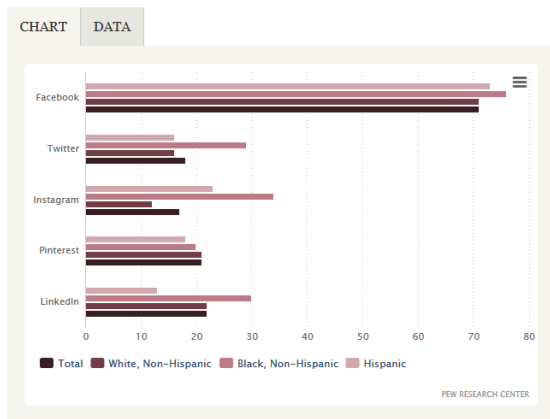
Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

- ▶ Small-sample studies: networking supports social interactions, trust, self-esteem and subjective well-being
- ▶ Large-sample studies: ambiguous conclusions. (Penard and Poussing (2010) for Luxembourg, Bauernschuster et al. (2011) for Germany, and Sabatini and Sarracino (2014) for Italy)

AMBIGUOUS? WHY?

Demographics of Social Media Users

Percent of online adults who use the following social media sites



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet Project Tracking Survey, August 7-September 16, 2013. N=1,445 internet users ages 18+.

Online technologies are good for social capital, aren't they?

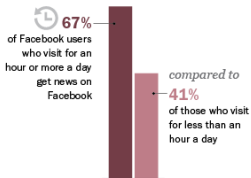
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Selezneva, Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data



Get updated on news!

Online technologies are good for social capital,
aren't they?

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capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data



Smile!

Online technologies are good for social capital,
aren't they?

Internet, mass
media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data



Enjoy a good joke... ?



You reported [Offensive Humor at its Best's photo](#) for containing graphic violence.

Photo not removed

Thanks for your report. We reviewed the photo you reported, but found it doesn't violate Facebook's Community Standard on [graphic violence](#), which includes depicting harm to someone or something, threats to

Motivation

Project proposal

- Purpose
- Variables
- Questions
- Data

Previous studies: Sabatini and Sarracino (2014)

Internet, mass
media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose

Variables

Questions

Data

First representative empirical study (117,878 observations)
on the **effect of online interactions** through:

- ▶ social networking sites (SNS)
- ▶ chats, newsgroups, and forms

on two dimensions of **social capital**:

- ▶ trust towards unknown others ('social trust', cognitive SC)
- ▶ social networks developed through face-to-face interactions (structural SC)

Sabatini and Sarracino (2014): main results

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capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose

Variables

Questions

Data

- ▶ Face to face interactions are strongly significantly and positively correlated with online networking
- ▶ Social trust is significantly and negatively correlated with online networking

- ▶ women show a significantly lower propensity for participation in networks
- ▶ women show a significantly lower propensity for face-to-face interactions
- ▶ women show a significantly higher propensity to trust others

Women as principal target of harassment and violence online

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Selezneva, Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

- ▶ Women in online interactions – > higher probability, then men, to lose social trust (Sabatini & Sarracino, 2014)
 - ▶ Potential reason? **Hate speech!**
 - ▶ evidence in Fallows (2005), USA, PEW research center
 - ▶ about 3/4th of online harassment incidents/cyberbullying targeted women, as reported by Working to Halt Online Abuse organization (WHOA) <http://www.haltabuse.org>
 - ▶ Facebook: activist group Women, Action and the Media (WAM) and the Everyday Sexism Project: campaign against sexist and violent content/ads on FB (since 2012)

Project proposal - purpose

Internet, mass
media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose

Variables

Questions

Data

The purpose of this project:

to explore in depth **the link from the mass-media use**
(traditional and digital ones)

to the different components of social capital

- ▶ social trust,
- ▶ face-to-face interactions,
- ▶ tolerance (e.g towards migrants)

Project proposal - explanatory variables

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capital

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Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

...accounting for some (*less standard*) *individual characteristics* such as

- ▶ propensity to risk
- ▶ values/respect/sensibility towards others opinions

These all are partially a result of the individuals culture (e.g. norms, parenting practices) (Byrnes et al, 1999)

– > *characteristics of partners and parents*

Project proposal - explanatory variables

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capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

Array of proxies that should correlate with the sensitivity to hate speech and risk aversion.

- ▶ people's sensitivity to hate speech $< - >$ time spent in front of the TV (more exposed to hate speech, less sensitive to it)
- ▶ $< - >$ number of books read
- ▶ risk aversion $< - >$ health-related and risk behaviours (smoking, water and super-alcoholic drinks consumption)

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media and social
capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables

Questions
Data

- ▶ What are the determinants of social trust among the traditional and digital media users?
- ▶ Are there any differences in the probability to report high levels of social trust among high- and low-risk individuals?
- ▶ May the differences in levels of social trust, if any, be explained by the different levels of sensibility to hate speech and similar behaviours?

Project proposal - data

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capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

The research might be conducted using various datasets.

European Social Survey (Rounds 1-6 covering the period of 2002-2012) may be used.

- ▶ mass-media categories: TV watching, radio listening, newspapers reading, and personal use of internet
- ▶ social trust: most people can be trusted, most time people helpful, people try to be fair.

- ▶ **The Multipurpose Survey on Households** by the Italian National Statistical Office (ISTAT)/ Used by Sabatini and Sarracino (2014); might be extended by the latest 2012 round. The survey covers about 150,000 individual observations for three years.
- ▶ **The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey:** rounds XVII-XX (2008-2011) contain information on the use of digital media.

Proposal - method

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capital

Selezneva,
Sabatini, Sarracino

Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

- ▶ endogeneity & possible reverse causality – \rightarrow 2SLS regressions (probit (mass-media use), ordered probit)
- ▶ number of instruments to treat some endogeneity issues (like in Sabatini and Sarracino, 2014: percentage of the population for whom DSL was available as instrument for online networking)

Proposal - expected results

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Selezneva,
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Motivation

Project proposal

Purpose
Variables
Questions
Data

Our results might contribute to:

- ▶ understanding the conditions behind the traditional and digital media use and differences in social trust might contribute to promote,
- ▶ vice versa promoting the use of on-line technologies among different categories of the population might contribute to the development of digital mass-media.

Thank you for your attention!

Comments are more than welcome!