

Research on the Relationship between Social Capital and Subjective Well-Being: Review and Prospect

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Abstract: Since Bourdieu formally put forward the modern, systematic social capital theory in the 1980s, social capital theory has become a hot topic for western economists, political scientists, sociologists and other scholars to study. After James S. Coleman will be in the perspective of human capital development, Robert D. Putnam it deepen the meaning of organization and so on various aspects of academic inquiry, social capital theory has become the west since the ninety s important analysis tool system, humanities and social sciences as the western related research provides inspirational theoretical basis. It is obvious that scholars at home and abroad have noticed the possibility of a connection between social capital and subjective well-being after the introduction of such subjective category theories as rational selectivity and subjectivism into the study of social capital theory, and have conducted researches from multiple perspectives. By searching, sorting, analysis of the existing research results, understanding of social capital and subjective well-being research development level in the forefront of the debate, the frontier theory, advantage and disadvantage of existing studies, promote our country social capital growth for this new era, people's subjective well-being enhance, promote academic research fields related to deepen the practice to provide literature basis, should be when we want.

1. Introduction

As the direct beneficiary of Bourdieu's social capital theory, the application of social capital theory in the West has more advantages than that in the East in terms of thinking and time. Introducing social capital theory into the study of subjective well-being has been done in the West since the last century, and foreign scholars have explored it on the basis of their own academic background.

In the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China's economy and society have achieved unprecedented development, the market economy has been deepening in twists and turns, and the civil society has continued to grow. We have seen the objective conditions for the application of social capital theory in China. At that time, the report of the 19th National Congress pointed out that "socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and the main social contradictions in our country have been transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing needs for a better life and the unbalanced development" [1]. As one of the key elements of a better life, if subjective well-being can be linked with social capital theory, it will certainly promote the research in the related fields of the two concepts and provide theoretical inspiration for the development of social capital and the improvement of people's well-being.

In addition, comparing with the research in this field at home and abroad on the whole, it is not difficult to find that foreign scholars pay attention to this field earlier, and the decade at the beginning of the 21st century is the climax of their research, while the related theoretical research has entered a low tide in recent years. The basic theoretical concepts adopted by relevant domestic research institutes-the concept of social capital and the concept of subjective well-being are mostly the concept of social capital put forward by Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam in 1980s and 1990s, and the "emotion (positive and negative emotions)+cognition (life satisfaction)" paradigm

of subjective well-being by scholar Diener, which is based on western theories. The regression analysis and model building adopted in the research methods mostly refer to western experience.

Under the above background, combining with Chinese academic tradition and actual situation, using the existing research achievements and relevant experience of domestic scholars, innovating the basic concepts, opening up the interpretation path, and constructing the theoretical system and model with Chinese characteristics should be the necessary move and inevitable trend of this topic research.

2. Analysis of Domestic Research Situation

2.1 General Situation of Domestic Research

In terms of literature quantity, although the domestic research on social capital and subjective well-being started late, a considerable amount of research results have been formed, which has promoted the deepening development of research in this field.

Seen from the characteristics of visual value, the literature formed by existing research has obvious stratification characteristics. Most researchers look at a certain group, community, organization and region from the micro-individual, family and middle-level. This paper explores the relationship between macro and society as a whole from three perspectives.

From the research content, as far as the existing research results of the two are concerned, the connotation and category of the two concepts themselves are seldom discussed, and targeted special literature is formed. Instead, it focuses on following the research trend in the West and using the social capital theory as a tool to analyze specific problems such as social phenomena or social objects.

From the perspective of research methods, qualitative research and quantitative research have both. With the help of relevant data and mathematical models, these studies not only put forward conjectures, verify false assumptions, and sum up specific conclusions, but also made some qualitative studies around the related issues of subjective well-being, which made the research itself more stereoscopic and full.

2.2 Microcosmic--Individual, Family

From the perspective of personal social network, scholars Li Ping and Zhu Guojun (2014) think that social capital (especially the “work social network” part) is closely related to the happiness of urban and rural residents (including subjective happiness), and good social capital conditions are helpful to enhance happiness [2]. Fu Liping and Jia Caimaojia (2017), scholars who study the relationship between public service satisfaction, also believe that personal social capital based on interpersonal communication is an important factor affecting residents' subjective well-being, and there is a positive correlation between them [3].

In addition to focusing on the traditional realistic media, scholar Liu Yi et al. (2018), starting from the virtual media of WeChat, drew a conclusion different from the mainstream achievements: by studying the close social capital and bridging social capital associated with WeChat, it was found that the former had nothing to do with the main dimensions of subjective well-being, while the latter only had a negative correlation with negative emotions [4].

2.3 Intermediate Perspective--Group, Community, Organization, Region

Taking land-losing farmers as research objects, scholars Wu Li, Yang Baojie and Wu Cifang (2009) think that the growth of social capital (referring to the improvement of interpersonal relationship and social support level in the village) plays a positive role in improving their mental health and subjective well-being [5]. Similarly, taking rural society as the category, scholar Pei Zhijun (2010) verified the structural relationship model by using the relevant data of typical rural areas in western Zhejiang, and found that the social capital of rural families has a strong influence on

different dimensions of subjective well-being, although the degree is different, but there is basically a positive correlation [6].

It is worth noting that many scholars focus on certain specific groups in cities. Taking various urban social groups in Chongqing as the research object, scholar Tian Zhenmin (2010) found that the richer the social capital (including social network, reciprocity and social support, social participation, etc.), the higher the subjective well-being of urban white-collar youth, and there is a significant positive correlation between them [7]. In addition to the above research, scholars Zhan Jing and Zhao Yue (2018) conducted a survey on two units in Beijing, and found that through community service and community participation, community social capital can have a strong positive impact on the subjective well-being of the elderly in the region, making them feel happier [8].

Furthermore, some scholars did not limit the research object, but chose a certain community or a certain city to delimit the category geographically: Scholars Xu Yanhui and Huang Yunling (2013) believe that the stronger the community ability, the better it can meet the needs of low-income residents through public services and community social capital (mainly reciprocity and trust among residents), and enhance their subjective well-being [9]. Scholars Jin Ming and Yang Bingcheng (2018) investigated the urban residents in Changchun, Jilin Province, and found that both trust and belonging in social capital positively and significantly affected their subjective well-being [10].

In addition, there are a few scholars who conduct research based on specific media in urban life. For example, Li Guangming, Xu Dongning and others (2018) study with cultural consumption as an intermediary shows that interacting with relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues and other groups will increase the social capital of new citizens, thus enhancing their subjective well-being [11].

2.4 Macroscopic--Society as a Whole, World Category

In addition to the micro and meso studies mentioned above, a considerable number of scholars use the relevant data of large-scale social surveys to study the relationship between the two concepts.

Scholars Zhao Bin and Liu Mina (2013) built a robust regression model with the help of CGSS related data, and found that social capital factors such as the participation degree of social groups and organizations, the participation degree of religious belief activities, the trust level of acquaintances, and the trust factor level of the government have neglected to enhance the subjective well-being of residents [12]. As far as the composition of social capital is concerned, individual structure, individual cognition and group structure social capital promote subjective well-being, while group cognition social capital inhibits promotion [13].

With the help of the relevant results of Jiangsu province questionnaire survey, the research by scholar Liu Mina (2016) through the media of sports participation shows that social capital (including trust, norms and social networks, etc.), which is the characteristic of social organization, can improve social efficiency by cooperative behavior, thus developing social capital and steadily improving subjective happiness [14].

2.5 Review of Domestic Research

Generally speaking, in terms of domestic research, researchers have constructed relevant theoretical models and obtained many innovative results, and formed some documents with high reference value with the help of questionnaire survey results of related projects or analysis of existing materials such as CGSS and WVS data. To a certain extent, it reveals the mechanism that social capital influences subjective well-being through interpersonal communication, social organization, social network and other media, and provides many experiences and many novel perspectives and viewpoints that foreign scholars in this field have not recognized, which is the value of domestic research.

However, there are some problems or defects in this kind of research with distinct stratification characteristics in China, which are embodied in the following three points:

First of all, the micro-level research is limited by the complexity of the individual psychological level. Focusing on the social concept of social capital obviously weakens the sociality of the theory itself, increases the difficulty of deriving the research results from special and general to a certain

extent, and easily leads to the problem that the contribution of related achievements to social practice and universal promotion is relatively limited.

Secondly, the problems of “simplification theory” or “cluster fallacy” easily occur in the research at the meso level due to the continuity of perspective. If the analysis unit is not clear enough, it often falls into excessive attention to individual particularity or social universality (micro or macro), resulting in logical conflict with the meso perspective itself, and then causing interference to related research.

Thirdly, the macro-level research obtains the positive correlation between social capital and subjective well-being through the cognition and structure of the concept of social capital. However, because information is more complicated than micro and meso, it needs more ingenious design by researchers, more consistent logic for deduction and verification, and it is easier to have the above-mentioned “vague” drawbacks. The reliability and validity of macro-level data, survey results, models and equations are also debatable.

In addition, obviously different from foreign studies, the research objects in this field in China are relatively single, and traditional research objects such as youth, the elderly, farm residents and urban residents are mostly selected; The starting point of the research is relatively rough, and there are some shortcomings, such as not decomposing the concept of social capital, selecting the key points and so on, which need to be overcome in theory and practice.

3. Analysis of Foreign Research Status

3.1 General Situation of Foreign Research

Foreign research on this subject is different from domestic research in many aspects, which are as follows:

First of all, foreign research started earlier than domestic research. Since the mid-1990s, foreign researchers, represented by western scholars, have devoted themselves to introducing the theory of social capital into the theoretical analysis of happiness, and started to build the basic theoretical framework, providing a solid research foundation for further in-depth research and detailed exploration.

Secondly, foreign studies are characterized by macroscopic exploration. On the one hand, we pay more attention to the research in a period of time than in China, and many studies observe the interannual changes of indicators in the form of follow-up investigation, which improves the confidence level of models and theories from the perspective of time longitudinal; On the other hand, foreign scholars pay attention to the use of transnational samples for in-depth exploration to enhance the explanatory power of research.

Thirdly, foreign research materials are relatively new. Many scholars have incorporated Facebook as a new social media, a typical social form represented by American debt-based society, and social development orientation represented by democratization trend into relevant research, in order to seek theoretical breakthroughs from these new things.

In particular, foreign scholars have diverse opinions on the relationship between social capital and subjective well-being. Compared with the vast majority of domestic scholars, there are not a few foreign scholars who hold opposition to the positive effect of social capital on subjective well-being, and think that there is no correlation or negative correlation between them, which reflects the profound differences between domestic and foreign studies to a certain extent.

3.2 Foreign Research and Analysis

As far as foreign studies are concerned, the most representative ones are the related studies of scholars Helliwell and Putnam, whose general view is that social capital has a significant impact on subjective well-being, with a positive correlation as the main one.

Two scholars began to explore the two concepts from the end of the last century. Their survey results in the United States (1995) showed that family, friends, neighbors and other major social

relations have a significant impact on subjective well-being [15]. Based on this initial data, Putnam, Heliwell (2001) conducted an in-depth study and concluded that “social capital characterized by self-organization and association participation can reduce the impact of relative income gap on individual residents and enhance their (subjective) happiness”; “Social capital has a positive welfare effect, and active community participation can enable residents to obtain various material and non-material (subjective well-being) returns in the process of interpersonal communication”.

With the help of digital materials research, scholar Wagner(2014) believes that as the key elements of social capital, the shrinking of social networks and the decline of social trust are important factors for the decline of happiness, and demonstrates the positive correlation between social capital and subjective happiness from the opposite side [16]. Isabel Neira(2018) used the 7th wave of European Social Survey in 2014 to conduct quantile regression analysis. The results show that every dimension of social capital has a positive correlation with subjective well-being, but different dimensions have heterogeneous effects on different quantiles of happiness distribution. All aspects of social capital have a greater impact on the social welfare of the unhappiest people than the happiest people [17].

It is worth noting that quite a few other scholars disagree with the view of “positive correlation”, think that they are relatively clear “negative correlation”, and introduce some new research media.

By expanding the visual distance, scholar Sarracino(2011) made an empirical study on the relationship between social capital and happiness in stages. The results of three stages showed that the development of social network and trust further expanded the category of happiness identification orientation of Europeans, and promoted the personal happiness of citizens in education, medical care and employment. On the whole, however, social capital has shown a declining trend [18], and similar research by scholar Rodríguez-Pose has further verified this conclusion [19].

More specifically, scholars such as Ram(2010) conducted an empirical study on transnational samples in the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America, and found that, as the most commonly used and reasonable measure of social capital in the study of transnational happiness, universal trust has no substantial impact on (subjective) happiness [20].

3.3 Review of Foreign Research

According to the analysis of the above research, the related research abroad has obvious characteristics of “scholarship”, “connection”, “generality” and “demonstration”.

As far as “scholarship” is concerned, different scholars have high heterogeneity and personal characteristics in basic concepts, research perspectives, research methods, etc., forming their own research logic and theoretical system. Most of them have conducted continuous and exploratory research, and gradually deepened divergent research in the branch direction under this topic.

As far as “connectedness” is concerned, researchers in related fields have close academic communication and cooperation, and have formed many research chains and achievement systems that can confirm each other, which is of great benefit to promoting the scientification, completeness and logicalization of relevant theoretical paradigms and deepening the theoretical level and academic depth of the subject as a whole.

As far as “generality” is concerned, because most of the materials used by western scholars are aimed at a large range and many objects, which have distinct macroscopic and universality, most of the research orientations and inductive theoretical systems selected by western scholars also have universal explanatory power and have universal analytical function for social phenomena.

As far as “positivity” is concerned, because foreign countries are greatly influenced by western positivism, most of these scholars take quantitative research as the guidance, obtain relevant data through questionnaires and scales, and carry out regression analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the help of analysis software (such as SPSS) to verify the theoretical assumptions and mathematical models put forward and constructed in advance.

Generally speaking, foreign related research inherited the traditional theory of social capital theory, and began to explore the whole or part of its relationship with subjective well-being, and actively expanded cross-cutting areas, such as social psychology, development sociology, development sociology, population sociology and other related issues, forming a macro and holistic

research style and achievements, which provided support and inspiration for the research in China and other countries or regions.

4. General Comments and Future Prospects

4.1 Study the Overall Characteristics

The overall characteristics of research reflect the development level and advantages and disadvantages of research, and are important materials for grasping this research direction. By analyzing and summarizing the relevant literatures at home and abroad in this research field, it is not difficult to find that this research topic has the following general characteristics:

4.1.1 Demonstration, Mathematics and Physics of Research Methods

An important feature of the related research in this field is positivism and mathematics and physics. Generally speaking, these documents and the research behind them are mostly studied with the help of social survey data of the project itself and/or authoritative survey data (such as CGSS, WVS-EVS, etc.), in order to explain the relationship between “social capital” and “subjective well-being” by means of regression model, so that mathematical analysis becomes an important feature and key support of relevant empirical research.

4.1.2 Heterogeneity and Novelty of Research Perspective

Most researchers choose different research perspectives to promote their own research according to their own research needs. In addition to the traditional social interaction, interpersonal relationship, economic relationship and other perspectives, some scholars also select relevant media and phenomena in the context of the Internet age to study, such as the discussion of the relationship between social capital and subjective well-being.

4.1.3 Diversification and Enrichment of Research Objects

From the overall situation at home and abroad, the related research in this field covers many types and different categories of research objects, such as college students, landless peasants, urban workers and low-income people. Starting from these objects with strong heterogeneity, a complete research pedigree and theoretical system have gradually formed in the related research at home and abroad.

4.1.4 Tendency and Convergence of Research Conclusions

Most of the related researches at home and abroad tend to think that there is a strong positive correlation between “social capital” and “subjective well-being”, and with the in-depth development of related research, compared with the previous “non-positive correlation” viewpoints, the “positive correlation” viewpoints account for an increasing proportion in the research, showing a “mainstream” trend.

4.2 Research Problems and Prospects

Through the in-depth analysis of the characteristics of related research, analyzing the related problems and shortcomings of rural research is to provide a prospect with practical value and forward-looking significance for the innovation and development of research in this field, grasp the frontier of world research, and seek for transcendental results.

4.2.1 Renewal of Theoretical Basis

At present, the research viewpoints and conclusions still stay on the limited data analysis and the summary of intuitive experience research, lacking the research on how social capital affects subjective well-being from the perspectives of neural mechanism, psychological mechanism and cognitive mechanism, hoping to make some breakthroughs from the theoretical basis.

4.2.2 Clarification of Related Concepts

The research on the universal concepts of social capital and subjective well-being keeps pace with the times, the transcendental development of social capital and subjective well-being, and the clarification of the decisive factors in the influencing mechanism are slightly insufficient. The clarification and discussion of categories and the rationalization and clarity of the system should be carried out dynamically and scientifically under the new social background and research results.

5. Conclusions

The main purpose of social science research is to abstract the theory that can serve social practice from social reality, which is the key to its value. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and social science research in the new era should have new academic characteristics and reflect the requirements of the new era.

According to the proposition of the relationship between subjective well-being and social capital, by reviewing relevant literature, combing and summarizing the main characteristics and existing problems of existing studies, and grasping the development context and innovation direction of related concepts, it will not only help deepen the development of social capital theory and innovate the connotation of subjective well-being, but also help to provide new theoretical support and logical support for how to enhance the happiness of the broad masses of the people and further realize the people's growing and better life.

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