

Article review: Pawar, M. (2006). "Social" "Capital"? *The Social Science Journal*, 43, 211-226

Brian Badgero

2012

The International Journal of Social Studies Review

UVic Libraries ePublishing Services

© 2012 Badgero.

Original citation:

Badgero, B. (2012). [Review of the article "'Social' 'Capital'?" by M. Pawar]. *International Journal of Social Studies Review*, 1(1), 7-8.

Downloaded from UVicSpace Research & Learning Repository

dspace.library.uvic.ca



**University
of Victoria**

Libraries



Article Review: Pawar, M. (2006). “Social” “Capital”? *The Social Science Journal*, 43, 211-226

Reviewed by Brian Badgero
University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

In “‘Social’ ‘Capital’”, Pawar aims to describe the term “Social Capital” as a false description of the definition given to it by many in the academic community. By breaking down both words and defining them individually, Pawar points out how their meanings conflict instead of complement. Pawar states that this creates deception by those who want to sell capital as a revolutionary companion to community-oriented social human behaviour. The analysis of this article could be beneficial to the social studies curriculum as it helps to unearth the potential misleading academic studies based around neo-liberal thought. This deconstruction could aid in analyzing 20th and 21st century history and human geography.

Pawar starts by defining “social capital” as the value of social relations and the role of cooperation and confidence towards collective or economic results. Pawar also lists other authors who describe relatively similar definitions around the ideas of societal community and productive results. It is seen as both specific and broad as it could be used to describe so many different aspects between “capital” and society. Pawar points out how it is popularized as “revolutionary” because it would make capitalism into the “solution” to help solve global social problems. The ever-encompassing idea of “social capital” makes it both a useful term for academics to attempt to tie capital to social concepts

while potentially confusing readers as to how it could fit into every aspect of society.

Breaking down “social” and “capital” has allowed the reader to get a better grasp of the differences between society and economics. Pawar defines “social” as an ally, companion, part of an organized community, and even as far as an organization that is part of a natural condition to human life. “Capital”, on the other hand, is described as a starting point of development, a sum of resources, and an accumulation of wealth. Pawar points out how society could help build “capital”, but it would not mean that society is “capital”. He emphasizes that capitalist exploitation and individualism is not evenly distributed throughout the global community. This concept ties into another “social” definition as a way to “militate” against exploitation. Pawar believes that the purpose of the term “social capital” is to socialize capitalist culture so that people can view issues and ideas around the world through a capitalist lens. This is the idea of hiding the exploitation and inequality of peoples, genders, and classes behind an open-armed approach by the “capital” right wing to the social “left”. It is this common deceit that Pawar wants to emphasize so that the global community could become cautious of capitalists when giving their hand out in trust so readily. Revealing this underlying meaning could help ensure that academic

thought is not trapped behind a biased capitalist view that could be forced upon history and geography secondary school students.

While it is easy to accept Pawar's work as revealing and essential to unbiased academic study, this topic needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Pawar's "alternatives" can be seen as either deep or lacking. One could understand how the misleading nature of "social capital" could alienate those who read this article, but there is little in the way of alternatives; it is more like an ultimatum. Pawar states that one should just abandon the phrase "social capital" because of the contradictions it implies. It is one thing to drop a term, but it needs the creation of a new replacement idea in order for it to make a better impact on what Pawar describes as human orientation instead of capital orientation. Further reasoning and academic discussions are needed to gain a better perspective on finding an ideological opposite to "social capital". Terms like "social agency" or "global agency" could reflect the idea of humanity taking action through collective efforts.

Pawar's paper can be credited with creating an analytical starting point for how to apply this knowledge. The "policy implications" statements like educating communities about "social capital", changing the language (which Pawar fails to do in his alternatives), and bringing to light the consequences of capital and its disregard for "humanness" (p. 222) are all ideas that could be springboards for educating various groups of people. Social studies students could use this article as an introduction to many analyses of late 20th and early 21st

century issues. Topics like globalization, micro loans, tied aid, and Canadian foreign policy could all fall under this analysis of whether or not Western nations have sincere social policies or a capital-based results and benefits mindset. Studies on Rwanda could bring up questions like whether or not it was economically sound for Canada to spend financial, political, or military intervention to that country during the 1994 genocide. Students could then question if there is a capitalist price on social issues like poverty, oppression, inequality, sexual/gender discrimination, etc. within society. It is this awareness that we want to see grow in our new generations of global citizens. The statement made in the policy implications can be applied and studied in other topics. Separating "social" and "capital" could create multiple views on case study assignments. These thought patterns could create new avenues of critical thought when going through the social studies curriculum, and enlighten students to perceive their global community in a new way outside of school.

Pawar's article stands as a precedent-setting study that aims to improve critical thinking. It sets up a method to break down a term that studies society's worth in regards to capital-based results. Although "social capital" may be perceived as innovative to social improvement, the conflicting use of "social" and "capital" together can create questionable debates to those who recognize the contradictions between these terms. A basic inquiry into a term like "social capital" could have greater critical thinking implications throughout a student's academic career.