Social Capital and Boarding Schools in Italy

Alessandra Carbognin*

1. **Author/s information**
*   Educandato "Agli Angeli", Verona

2. **Contact authors' email addresses**
*   dott.alessandra.carbognin@gmail.com

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Alessandra Carbognin

Alessandra Carbognin
Educandato "Agli Angeli", Verona

Corresponding author:
E-mail address: dott.alessandra.carbognin@gmail.com

Abstract

The field of education is the area to which the concept of SC is traditionally applied. This study develops a very specific topic: the role played by residential secondary schools, especially in the form of public institutions. These are very specific institutions and quite rare in Italy. The conception of SC adopted in this study separates the social contexts in which it is generated distinguishing three types of SC: 1) Family SC; 2) Wider community SC; 3) Generalized SC. This paper looks at the measure in which the three types of SC affect the development of human capital (HC), of civic culture, and of the planning skills (generative skills) of the students in public residential high schools. In this work I present the data relative to the incidence of SC on micro- and meso-type relationships. This quantitative survey collected data on an experimental sample of students from all the Italian public boarding schools, and on a control group of students from an ordinary Italian state high school.
Keywords: Social capital, human capital, state secondary schools.

Introduction

Within the school environment some important social processes are engendered that can lead to social cohesion or, conversely, to inequalities, distress, discrimination and social disintegration. The tight network of relationships that is created between the main players in the educational context, i.e. the students and their families, the teachers, the school directors and the youth workers, allows an in-depth analysis of these processes.

Based on a long tradition, in Italy there are two types of public residential schools: the girls' boarding school (educandato) and the boys's boarding school (convitto). Inside both types of boarding institutions there is a school open to students throughout the school year.[1]

In this essay I will examine some aspects of the Italian residential education system through the study of primary and secondary social capital (SC) production, taking into consideration some structural aspects (such as socioeconomic status, or academic achievement, i.e. the human capital (HC) possessed by the students and their families). The concepts that guided my analysis are trust, cooperation, civic and generative skills[2]; they made it possible to highlight the different forms of SC, from the concept of SC as an individual resource[3] to the SC identified as a collective resource.

The concepts of HC and SC have been well received in the field of social sciences, and it can be said that the concept of SC itself was generated by reflections on education and the development of HC (Hanifan, 1916; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).[4] Moreover, the direction taken in recent years emphasizes the themes that deal with the individual in the educational context, and reflect on his/her ability to interact with the institutional school world.

HC is generally understood as the sum of the skills and relational abilities that produce a real and tangible investment through which education and training become indicators of their economic. The term has already been examined by Becker and Stigler (1977) in their study of culture as

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[1] See Gecchele (2006) and Franchini and Puzzuoli (2005) (ed.).
[2] With "generative skill" we intend our capability for projecting the future.
[3] For an idea of the Italian sociological research landscape regarding SC as individual resource, see the recent Di Nicola, Stanzani and Tronca (2008).
[4] Among the key texts on the issues in question and the sociological approach to education, the works of Durkheim (1911, 1936), Weber (1922) and Parsons (1959) deserve a particular mention.

"meritorious good" and "experience good".

Since the end of the 1990s, and in particular over the last decade, an ever-growing number of sociologists and political scientists have worked on these concepts, contributing greatly to educational science.

SC is generally understood as the resource linked to relationships based on trust, help and cooperation that can produce further trust, help or individual and/or collective resources. It can be considered a kind of "social binding force".

Because of the importance that the concepts of SC and HC have on a social level, there has been an attempt to elaborate on their meaning, particularly in the field of the education system, where the new generations of citizens are formed.[5]

I have tried to highlight the importance of one fundamental aspect: the presence of SC in the school environment, and particularly within relationships.

My starting hypothesis is that of a relationship of reciprocal fuelling between SC and HC. In particular I hold that the presence of a number of subjects – even in a highly regimented residential context – promotes interactions that, day after day, create a social network of relationships that could help the development of the person. It is especially the concept of SC that makes such a tie possible: the educational role of school institutions in general is strictly connected to the concepts of transmission, action (teaching, learning, cooperation, reciprocity) and participation.

Launching a study on SC and HC within boarding schools stresses the importance of a potential intrinsic to human sociality, emphasizing how SC contributes to the development of a sense of community (sense of belonging, interpersonal and institutional trust, cooperation and participation) among students, teachers, youth workers, families, and all the actors that daily share the educational experiences of boarding schools[6].

This sharing in turn encourages socialization, a bigger commitment to cultural obligation and increased social responsibility, all important instruments for planning the future and encouraging social mobility and occupational status.

At the same time the theory of SC has its roots in the idea that having lots of "contacts" in life is very important, when these constitute a personal resource. The more people one knows, and the more one shares a particular life condition with them, the more SC one will have[7].

This can condition the course of our lives, both positively and negatively. Sociology holds that even our own identity is moulded, at least in part, by the people we know and the relationship we build with them.[8]

The main feature of SC is the hypothesized link between individual experiences of daily life (micro level) and the bond with institutions and the community (meso and macro levels). For example, P. Donati (2006), in the presentation of his work on the voluntary sector and the employing of SC in Italy, maintains that we are witnessing a process of continuous transformation in the social culture of education. As that social fabric wears thin it is gradually replaced by a disorderly multiplicity and disparate subjective possibilities[9]. Therefore SC radically affects the life

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[5] With regard to the theme of SC in the educational process see Bourdieu (1977) and Coleman (1988). We can therefore speak about SC in formal and informal educational contexts (see Colozzi, 2011). For an in-depth analysis of the school system see Brint (2006). This author is one of the contemporary authors who have presented some interesting points in this context, with the aim of encouraging the new generation of educators, social scientists and citizens to see the school system as connected to every event that changes the world. Introducing his work, Brint (2006) outlines the sociological conceptions of education, such as structural functionalism, the theories of social power and neo-Weberian approaches, educational policies and their cultural objectives, as well as socialization, the transformation of values and the importance of a moral education. His text has been given due regard in order to contextualize, analyze and empirically examine the particular context of boarding schools in Italy.

[6] For a study on the role of Italian residential university colleges in generating SC, see Ferrucci and Stanzani (2006).

[7] Among the Italian work on network analysis, see Di Nicola (1986, 1998, 2002) and Chiesi (1999), and for an application of network analysis to the topic of SC, see Tronca (2007, 2008).

[8] The reference is to the works with an interactionist approach that, along with Cooley's concept of "{I mirror}" and the distinction between "I" and "Me", have made a decisive contribution to the concept of individual identity as the result of a process of socio-cultural identification [cf.] (Cooley, 1964).

[9] Donati and Colozzi (2006) maintain the hypothesis that the voluntary sector enhances and exploits SC more than state organisations and the non-profit private economic sector. These conclusions are the result of a study in the context of state schools and the non-profit sector, university colleges, neighbourhood associations, voluntary organizations, etc. Donati has stressed how different forms of SC – family, community, generalized or civic – are fostered in these environments and relational goods are produced that promote the cohesion of the social fabric (see also Donati, 2002).

of each person, and so it becomes an issue of great importance.

1. Theoretical Background: Social Capital vs. Human Capital

According to Putnam, SC is the sum of the elements of social organization – such as trust, shared rules and social participation – that can improve the efficiency of a society, in so far as they aid the coordinated actions of individuals (Putnam, 1993). He highlights the fact that social networks have a value in themselves and that social contacts influence (whether positively or negatively) the productivity of individuals and of social groups (Putnam, 2000). According to this author, social relations are a resource that potentially leads to cooperation, and he develops a theory according to which civic and associational activities are the foundation of integration and social wellbeing.

Coleman (1990) defines SC as the totality of the resources connected to family relationships and social community structures that can be used in the social or cognitive development of children to develop their future HC. Concurring with the sociology of education, he defines SC as a valid tool for creating norms. SC is very much present in the school context and is a real resource available to all, not just an élite. According to this view, SC is extremely important, not only for the acquisition of educational values essential for healthy human growth, but also for the consolidation of the process of cognitive development for the growth of individual identity.

According to Bourdieu (1977), however, SC is the capital represented by all the social relationships useful to providing "support" when required. In other words, it is the sum of the resources derived from belonging to lasting networks, whether more or less institutionalized, and consists of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Bourdieu, 1992). Bourdieu sees in the concept of SC the "only instrument" able to describe the strategic relevance of social resources. Bourdieu's vision of SC is in any case anchored to the centrality of the family, both in regard to the perpetuation of values and inter-generational cognitive development (HC) and as a form of social control.

Usually HC takes the form of "private good", while SC is often seen as a relational good pertaining to whoever produces it and to whoever benefits from it.

From this perspective the accretion of HC is the result of deliberate and intentional choices; it is an investment made by single individuals. HC has been studied in the school context above all in order to emphasize the importance of improving the quality of education. It has in fact become a hot topic of the current day. Through it, it is possible to study the effect of education on productivity and on youth employment, as suggested in the studies of the economist Becker (1994).

So far, the process of development of HC and SC in Italian boarding schools has yet to be verified; nor has the presence of the three types of SC – family, wider community and generalized – been looked at in depth. In recent years it has been claimed that there is an "evident link of complementarity" between HC and SC; the growth of one should feed the growth of the other, in a dynamic of virtuous reciprocity.[10]

To overcome the theoretical limits of the three main scholars of SC mentioned above, I have used the relational theory of SC, an emerging line of study that is taking hold both in Italy and abroad. The relational dimension is the first indicator of a society's "state of health" (Donati, 2006).

What new aspects of the concept of SC can be discovered concerning the analysis of relationships and social behaviour? The answer can be found in the central role that SC gives to social networks and relationships, understood as real resources; after all, this is the concept of SC that Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have in common.

An interesting conception of SC as a new theoretical reference is the relational view put forward by Donati (2003, 2007), Donati and Tronca (2007) and Donati and Colozzi (2007): "from the viewpoint of relational sociology, SC is not a characteristic either of the individual as such, nor of socio-cultural structures taken by themselves, but is a characteristic of social relationships. Not of all social relationships, but – specifically – of those that exploit relational goods (both primary and secondary)" (Donati and Colozzi, 2007).

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[10] Becker, Murphy and Tamura (1994).

For this perspective, a multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept of SC has been adopted. It is necessary, however, to keep in mind the existence both of the SC in primary family relationships – relatives, friends and neighbours (micro SC) – and the SC generated by secondary relationships in "external" institutions, which create reciprocal acquaintance (meso SC). Out of these forms a further SC should develop (macro SC), pertaining to secondary relationships with the generalized other: to civic culture and social engagement, which schools are expected to promote.

2. The Study

Below I will present all the aspects of SC in relation to the specific elements of education: peer group, community, interactional ability of the students, school spirit and belonging, as well as academic achievements, trust and future aspirations[11].

The analysis of the relationship between the different characteristics of the individuals attending boarding schools is developed both through individual factors – such as the characteristics of each individual's profile (sex, age, education, occupation, socioeconomic status, religiosity, political orientation, value choices and individual behaviour) – and through structural factors, such as the characteristics of the area of residence, the structure of the family and the type of organization in the boarding school.

In the research design, the SC of relational networks was hypothesized as an intervening variable necessary to explain and understand the relationship between individual factors and the environmental context. In this way the relationship became a variable vital to the understanding of the social and educational environment.

Specific indicators of the structure of the primary networks, solidarity and reciprocal exchanges were used for the research. This data was collected using a multi-layer questionnaire that was submitted to a representative sample of the boarding students from residential schools in Florence, Milan, Padua, Palermo, Udine and Verona[12].

The questions that guided the study presented in this paper are the following:

1. In what way are boarding schools vehicles of SC in its various forms (micro, meso and macro)?
2. Does the exploitation of HC correspond to the production of SC?
3. To what extent does the residential and organisational structure of boarding schools affect the production of SC among peers?

2.1 The Sample

The quantitative phase of the study concerned the gathering of data through a structured questionnaire used for all six Italian boarding schools.

The universe consists of 1791 individuals with the sub-division shown in Table 1. The total number of day pupils is 1484, while that of boarders is 307, to which the 838 people in the control sample must be added. All the figures refer to the school year 2009-2010 and regard the 2nd to 5th form of secondary school (high school). The students in the sample group are between 15 and 19 years old, the age group most involved in the process of growth and interaction both with their peer group and the world of adults.

Each boarding school was asked to provide the total number of day pupils and boarders; using a specific table of calculations, I found the size of the random stratified sample representative of the environment in question. The survey was carried out between November 2009 and March 2010. Table 1 summarises the quantitative description of the theoretical sampling on the total cases.

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[11] For other Italian studies on SC and school institutions from the relational perspective see Scanagatta and Maccarini (2009).

[12] Another part of the research analysed qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, focus groups, the biographies of female students and former boarders at a residential institution in Verona. In this paper, however, I will present only some of the data from the quantitative section relating to current aspects of the school world.

Table 1: Stratified Sample.

	Universe			Theoretical sample		Real sample	Total questionnaires
	Students	Boarders	Total	Students	Boarders	Boarders	
Verona	587	66	653	148	17	17	165
Palermo	118	42	160	30	11	11	41
Milan	68	19	87	17	5	6	23
Padua	290	10	300	73	3	5	78
Udine	236	107	343	59	27	27	86
Florence	185	63	248	46	16	16	62
Total	1484	307	1791	373	77	82	455
				373	77	455	
Boarding schools				450		455	455
Verona (control sample)	838	0	838	263	0	0	263
Total quest.							718

The boarding students sample was obtained calculating a sampling error of +-4%, based on the most unfavourable level of variability. The result was a theoretical sample of 450 cases, proportionally distributed against the number of boarding schools and divided into boarders and day pupils. The 718 students who took part in the survey received the same questionnaire containing 64 questions. The questionnaires were administered between November 2009 and February 2010.

It is now time to make an operative analysis of the dimensions of SC. Using the relational approach we can realize a particular operationalisation of the concept of SC for the purpose of empirical research. The approach in question maintains that the following dimensions contribute to the formation of SC:

1. The structure of relational networks;
2. Reciprocal action aimed at the exploitation of social bonds (cooperative action);
3. The reproduction of an attitude of trust;
4. The forms of value-sharing within the network.

In our study, these four dimensions were operationalised in order to measure a series of indicators and establish the SC index, with SC divided into 3 levels: micro, meso and macro. In each level the "bonding tendency" and the "bridging tendency" of the SC was observed. The micro level acts as a control to measure the meso SC effectively produced by educational institutions. The meso level of SC is an important indicator of the relationships between peers and among the boarding school staff. The macro level is the testing ground to evaluate the effects produced by the SC generated in the micro and meso spheres. On each of the three levels the SC has been examined in the light of the dimensions mentioned above.

The questionnaire submitted to the students also looked at the presence of emergent effects of SC:

1. academic achievement;
2. civic and boarding school culture;
3. planning skills.

The hypothesis of this study can be condensed into the following four points:

1. The family (micro SC) is the root of the trust in the generalized other;
2. The wider community (meso SC) can promote the development of HC and produce cooperation among peers;
3. Micro and meso SC are linked to macro SC;
4. Macro SC can promote academic achievement and planning skills as emergent effects.

The processes that subtend these three hypotheses are: "transmission of values", "socialization" and "associational skills".

It has been hypothesized that there are emergent values within the act of education, and new ways of socializing that are taking hold.

The basic hypothesis is that within boarding schools there is a particular form of SC generation

that can strengthen HC, raising the quality of both cultural and relational performances. It is also likely that behind a good level of HC there are active generative skills. We further hypothesize that the meso SC contributes to the production of macro SC, developing a civic culture with higher levels of trust in the generalized other that, if translated into positive factors, would allow for an increased trust in the future and more competitive financial and cultural power.

3. Data Analysis

The combined number of boarders and day pupils is 454. Of a total of 444 participants (10 missing), 75.2% are female and 24.8% are male. The most common years of birth are 1992 and 1994. Second-year students are the greatest in number, constituting 33.4% of the respondents. The average number of students per class is 21.2, ranging from a minimum of 10 to up 30 pupils. Boarders in residential institutions stay for the duration of the school year, with the majority attending school within the same institution; their presence per class is on average 3.85 boarders per class, with a range that varies from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 23.The students interviewed come mostly from towns and cities (34.5%) followed by countryside, mountains or seaside villages (30.9%). A comparison with the control sample shows a similar structural situation.

3.1 Loneliness or Community: Associational Skills

In relation to civic engagement and the tendency to get together or to organize their free time, in reply to the question on interest in politics 37.2% state they have "little" interest, with the negative extreme ("none at all") constituting 16.5% and the positive ("a lot")15.8%.

The information taken from the control sample shows an even lower interest in politics (47.1% are "little" interested in politics).[13] This figure suggests low levels of trust in institutions.

In answer to the questions on involvement in various associations, the students express little interest and are not very involved. In particular, apart from sports associations, which 55.6% of the students belong to, the data show that 79.5% "do not take part" in charity associations, 76.6% "are not active" in volunteer work, 75.9% "are not members" of a cultural association, 75.4% "are not part of religious groups", 88.4% have not joined any environmental group, 88% are not active in politics, 63% are not involved in music or theatre, 91.5% are not interested in pacifist groups and 95% do not even belong to well-known Italian youth associations such as ARCI, ACLI, ENDAS, NOI, etc. The social involvement of the control sample displays a situation that is no better.

The friendly interaction that develops between students at the same school can also be strengthened outside the school environment. Among themselves, girls show more openness in regard to friendship and trust between peers (sharing "confidences" "advice" and "moral support"). Boys prefer games and sports, and share information on school work or hobbies. This bond is perceived as a resource also for the future, much more so than the relationships of trust established with teachers and youth workers. Trust is placed in the family first and in schoolmates and friends second.

3.2 Community and Belonging

For the question "which of the following communities do you feel you belong to?", both boys and girls had a choice of the following options: City – Region – Italy – Europe – World. Boarding school students gave Italy as their first choice (25.9% of the total). In the control sample, conversely, 34.1% of the students answered: City.

However, when asked whether there is the "need for an authority, such as the State, to reduce poverty and redistribute wealth", 33.4% of the students answered "some need". There are no great significant extremes, since the frequency is also distributed evenly across the other answers: none

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[13] 9,9% less compared with boarders.

at all, little, great.

Many students (35.5%) believe that "each individual person should strive to produce more wealth", but, more importantly, 40.8% believe that "people should help each other a lot more". In this case generosity helps, and it is an option chosen by 31.4% of the respondents. However, 51.3% of them "have never helped a friend financially", while 11.1% do so often. The answers from the control group confirm these percentages.

Regarding religious affiliation, 75.3% of the boarding school students declare they are Roman Catholic (the figure for the control sample reaches 80.8%). In 37.4% of the responses the students in the educational institutes consider themselves "fairly religious", but do not pray much. While 26% of boarders and day pupils attend services only on special occasions (weddings, christenings, etc.), the young people in the control group attend religious services very often, that is to say once a week. This result applies to 30.7% of the respondents from the control sample (17.6% of boarders). Generally, although religious participation is not perceived as associational participation by the students interviewed, the young people in the control sample have an active social life outside school, particularly in a religious context (13.1% more than in the boarding schools).

3.3 The Relationship of the Students with their Institute and Academic Achievement

Many students attending residential institutions perceive the attention their school pays to human relations as "sufficient" (see Tables 2 and 3).

40.3% of them replied "sufficient" while 26.8% replied "little"; 18% of the interviewees felt instead that their school pays "a lot" of attention to human relations. When it comes to high levels of attention towards human relations on the part of the students, boarding schools attain a higher percentage: 23.8%, against 19.1% of the control sample.

Similar percentages emerge in reference to the help their school gives to socially disadvantaged students.

The majority of students (33.8%) believe that "their school does little to involve the family in school life" and that it is "not very good at creating cooperation between parents with different ideas and cultures".

29.2% of respondents believe their school is not very effective in helping parents in their educational role, with 27.3% answering "not at all".

The control sample does not depart much from these percentages. Perhaps a decrease in the school's involvement with the parents is more evident in the frequency of the answer "little" given by the students, which reaches nearly 42%, against 33.8% in the boarding schools.

Table 2: Can you tell me how much attention your school pays to human relations?

	Boarding schools %	Control group	Total
Very little	359	330	348
Sufficient	403	479	431
Very much	238	191	221
Total	1000	1000	1000
N	441	261	702

Table 3: Can you tell me how much your school helps parents in their educational role?

	Boarding schools %	Control group	Total
Not at all	273	178	238
Little	292	395	330
Sufficiently	262	271	265
Reasonably	87	70	80
Very much	34	8	24
Do not know	52	78	62
Total	1000	1000	1000
N	441	261	702

3.4 Time Dedicated and Help Received.

In response to the question "how much do you think you will be able to count on the help of your school friends in the future?", 43.9% of day pupils and boarders answered "sufficiently", while 37.7% opted for "a lot" (in comparison, the control group answered the same question with 47.7% and 30.9% respectively).

To the question on how much they can trust their schoolmates, 51.1% of boarding school students replied that they trust them as much as other people, while 24.5% trust their fellow pupils in the institution more than others (and 11% a lot more than other people).

On the help received from educators, schoolmates and other boarders, 48.9% replied "none" and 24.9% "little", while 5.8% expressed great trust in them.

If we check the control group on the question about school friends, 46.6% of the sample put their school friends on the same level as other people. 26.3% consider them "a bit more trustworthy than other people" and 13% trust them "a lot more than other people". When asked how much they have been helped by teachers and school mates, 54.7% of the control group answered "not at all" (5.8% less than the boarding school students).

In regard to leisure time spent with schoolmates and fellow boarders, in answer to the question "how much time, in a typical day, do you spend with your schoolmates or fellow boarders outside of school hours?" 28.1% said "less than one hour" and 22.2% "1 to 2 hours". At opposite ends of the scale there are 15.2% that spend no time with school friends and 13.6% of students that spend "more than 5 hours a day" with schoolmates.

In the control group there is a higher percentage (46%) that spend "less than 1 hour" with schoolmates outside school hours (17.9% less than in the boarding schools), 16% that spend "no time at all" and 0.8% that spend "more than 5 hours a day".

The most substantial difference in the two samples is between those that spend "a lot of time" with their school friends outside of school hours. This difference is bigger for day pupils and boarders compared with the control group.

The interviewees stated that during the time spent with friends and schoolmates they talk mostly about loved ones , followed by "study", but above all they appreciate "advice" and "moral support" (see Tables 4 and 5).

When asked "how much can you count on the help of your school friends?" in times of need, on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean of the values chosen by respondents emerged as 6.91.

In table 4 emerges a SC as collective and generalized resource. 21,3% of boarding school students are interested in social issues (but only 9,2% in the control sample). 51,6% of boarding school students talk with friends about affective issues (30,9% in the control sample). The students of the control sample prefer to talk about their hobbies (37,4%).

Table 5 shows an increase of SC as individual resource, connectable to the community life within the boarding schools (30,4% of boarding school students talk together about everyday objects and 44,2% about requests for help).[14]

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[14] Against 14,6% and 29,8% in the control sample.

Table 4: What do you talk about with your boarding school friends? (Percentages of responses).

	Boarding schools		Control group		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Private life in general	415	446	324	262	381	708
Study	457	446	531	262	484	708
Social issues	213	442	92	262	168	704
Political issues	126	446	87	263	111	709
Religion	34	444	42	261	37	705
Hobbies in common	406	443	408	262	407	705
Sport	226	443	374	262	281	705
Loved ones	516	442	309	262	439	704
Local issues	120	443	69	26	101	704
Cultural and artistic subjects	90	445	23	261	65	706

Table 5: What do you share with your boarding school mates? (Percentages of responses).

	Boarding schools		Control group		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Information	397	443	419	260	4054	703
Everyday objects	304	441	146	260	245	701
Money	43	441	46	261	44	702
Help	442	437	298	262	388	699
Intimate feelings and thoughts	393	440	197	259	320	699
Books	143	442	42	260	105	702
Lesson notes	442	443	337	261	403	704
Compulsory chores within the boarding school	56	427				
Comfort and moral support	557	245	352	92	481	337
Complicity	514	226	394	102	469	328

3.5 Trust

The element of trust can be considered the "glue" holding every relationship together, especially regarding the production of SC.

In general, 61.2% of boarding school students "trust" other people. Regarding trust within one's school, and towards family members through the school years, the results are the following: throughout the school years, for the boarding school students the trust in teachers "improves fairly significantly" (36.9%), while it remains "unchanged" towards parents for more than half of the interviewees (57.2%). Trust in educators diverges: for 28.5% of students it "remains unchanged" throughout those years, while for 23% of them it "improves" with time. Trust in school friends has "improved significantly" for 41.9% of boarders and day pupils. The control group confirms these trends.

Each of the two groups revealed that students perceived an unchanged level of trust towards parents, a significant increase in their trust in schoolmates, and increased trust towards their teachers during their time at school.

In general, in the lives of the teenagers interviewed, there is a high level of trust in the family (parents and grandparents). In fact, in times of need, they trust a lot in help from their families. Trust is also given to parents when it comes to shared values; in fact, here friends come second.

Looking at trust in institutions, the results show that the students have a lot of trust in the following: United Nations (UN), European Union, police forces. In the background there is mistrust towards "national" political institutions. These data are also confirmed by the respondents in the control group.

3.6 Future opportunities

The study found that a large part of today's youth does not feel great enthusiasm for the future, instead viewing it critically and pragmatically. They have many resources at their disposition and this works in their favour in building their future, although it might not be easy. The most significant results of the survey are presented below.

44.6% of boarders and day pupils of boarding schools believe it will be "fairly easy to find a job in the future"; 53% think it will be "easy to find a life partner" and 47.5% to "have children". 54.5% agree that "the important thing for a woman is to find the right man, marry him and have a nice family"; while 89.5% agree that "a man should study in order to find a better job in the future".

64.6% are "fairly sure " they will be able to "cope with the difficult challenges in life", while "dealing with emergencies and unexpected choices" is more difficult: 56.9% believe they will be able to rise to the occasion fairly well, 15.4% that they will do so very capably, while 25.2% feel they are not likely to be able. About their future working life, the majority of students (46.5%) think they will be fairly able to plan their work and 43.2% declare themselves to be sufficiently able to tolerate emotional and physical stress. In general, 49.8% describe themselves as "fairly happy" at present. Only 18.9% are very happy, while 8% are basically unhappy. Both boarding school students and those in the control group think that in life it is important to have a good range of skills (1st place), and to be a wise and honest person (2nd place). What emerges is that, in their opinion, to have a successful life it is necessary to have an education (1st place) and to be able to cope (2nd place).

3.7 The Different Levels of Social Capital and their Impact on Human Capital

The construction of concise indices of the various types of SC made it possible to measure each type of SC for the entire sample and compare it with the control sample.

First of all, it is evident that, on a scale from 0 to 10, the indices of the three types of social capital all fall between 4 and 6 (Table 6). Notwithstanding this, the most relevant fact for our study is the lack of any substantial difference between the levels of social capital achieved by boarding school students and those in the control sample. Therefore there is no evidence of boarding school life providing a more productive context in terms of wider community social capital.

However, it is equally interesting to compare the various types of social capital (Table 7). From the figures we can see that there is a positive and statistically significative correlation between the different levels of social capital. This means that as family social capital increases, so do wider community social capital and the generalized kind. At the same time, as wider community social capital increases, so does the generalized kind. Therefore we can say that at least boarding schools, as centres of socialisation among students, can have a role in the moulding and education of the civic culture of future citizens[15].

This measurement is further confirmed by an analysis of the generative skills index where, as shown in Table 8, both the boarding schools and control samples display average levels.

The distribution of the average exam marks presents the same pattern, with slight differences between boarding schools and the control sample (Table 9). However, if we observe the correlations between average exam marks and different kinds of social capital (Table 10), the figures show that the wider community social capital generated in boarding schools, is important for promoting good scholastic performance. This seems to confirm the fourth hypothesis.

Lastly, we can observe that if we analyse the correlation between the indices of the different kinds of social capital and the generative skills index, we can find a small but positive correlation between each kind of social capital and the students' trust in being able to face their future challenges.

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[15]   As mesured by the generalized SC.

Table 6: Indices of Social Capital for boarding schools/control group.

	Boarding Schools			Control Sample			T - test	
	Mean	St. Dev.	n	Mean	St. Dev.	N	T	Sig
Family Social Capital Index	535	148	454	539	115	264	-	-
Wider Community Social Capital Index	404	83	416	395	74	254	-	-
Generalized Social Capital Index	417	137	419	438	124	246	-206	P < 0.05

Table 7: Social capital indices and their correlations (boarding schools).

		Family Social Capital Index	Wider Community Social Capital Index	Generalized Social Capital Index
Family Social Capital Index	Pearson's r		288	204
	Sig.		p < 0.001	p < 0.001
	N		416	419
Wider Community Social Capital Index	Pearson's r			0,170
	Sig.			p < 0.001
	N			393

Table 8: Generative Skills Index for boarding schools/control group.

	Boarding Schools			Control Sample			T - test	
	Mean	St. Dev.	n	Mean	St. Dev.	N	T	Sig
Generative Skills Index	441	80	435	432	62	262	-	-

Table 9: Average marks in the final school year.

	Boarding Schools			Control Sample			T - test	
	Mean	St. Dev.	n	Mean	St. Dev.	N	T	Sig
Average Marks	743	89	418	727	76	255	262	P < 0.01

Table 10: Correlation between social capital indices and scholastic achievement (boarding schools).

		Family Social Capital Index	Wider Community Social Capital Index	Generalized Social Capital Index
Average marks in final school year	Pearson's r	80	154	96
	Sig.	-	p < 0.001	-
	N	418	394	396

Table 11: Correlation between social capital indices and generative skills (boarding schools).

		Family Social Capital Index	Wider Community Social Capital Index	Generalized Social Capital Index
Generative Skills Index	Pearson's r	119	146	236
	Sig.	p < 0.05	p < 0.01	p < 0.001
	N	435	437	410

4. Results

What emerges from this study is that the relational network formed within school institutions creates a meso-level SC, with a spirit of solidarity amongst peers (as we can see in Tables 2, 4 and 5). From this we can say that the second hypothesis seems to be confirmed. At the same time, as shown in paragraph 4.6, the dynamics developed through relational networks towards the outside world promote capital that can be used in the future, apparently confirming part of the third

hypothesis. In particular, the internal relational dynamics are used by the boarding schools more to enhance their reputation with local institutions than to promote the development of social networks between boarding school students and their peers in the local community.

There seem to be no substantial differences between the residential institutions and the control sample, except for a slightly different background, a higher level of religiosity, and more mutual support and association with their peers.

It must be noted that in this study there is no clear difference in the production and development of SC between public boarding schools and traditional state schools. In both cases a meso-level relational network with a strong spirit of solidarity among peers is evident, as predicted by the second hypothesis (see the Tables 1-5).

As for the other hypotheses proposed in this work, for example the first, we can say that the family (micro SC) is at the root of the trust felt towards the generalized other, besides fostering meso-level capital, as shown in Tables 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

In paragraph 4.6 the third hypothesis, in which capital that can be used in the future is promoted, is confirmed, at least in part.

The fourth hypothesis is definitely confirmed in Table 9, since the three types of SC can promote academic achievement and planning skills as emergent effects.

This survey has established the presence of strong bonds between the students and their families, and among friends and schoolmates.

5. Conclusions

SC is a stimulating domain since it is the magnifying lens of the "state of social health" through which values (the cornerstones of a society) can be described, defined and analyzed. Increases in social participation, trust, esteem, reliability and daily support improve the quality of social life. It has emerged that the path each boy and girl walks every day, in the school and in his or her habitual environments, creates the life experience fertilising the ground upon which grow the fruits of culture: not only civil, but also and above all human.

Beyond any particular position on the organisation of time for educational purposes, the organisation of residential institutions is quite regulated and clear to all. The students live in the institutes: they attend classes, sleep, eat, walk, play, study, have access to many places inside and outside the school and establish relationships. Generally girls have a circle of friends that includes both genders, smaller compared to those of boys of the same age, but towards which they show more care and attention. Their male friends and schoolmates, on the other hand, have a stronger bond with their own gender, have a larger number of friends, and spend more time with them, mostly at play.

The students' sense of belonging is created not so much by the educational institution itself, but by the relationships that are formed within it (especially among peers, besides particularly trusted adult figures). These relationships are also supported by the families, which consider education a value (thus fostering high academic achievement) and encourage a relationship of cooperation and support between their children and their school friends.

Residential educational institutions, as an educational entity, are a privileged and welcoming place, especially at the meso level. It is in this context that the SC is triggered and develops (although largely supported by the micro kind).

We have established the existence of a kind of social pool created by living in a community, considered an added value of this experience, with the potential of producing "future fruits" at macro level. For this reason boarding schools demonstrate the capacity to produce wider community SC, which can lead to a ripening of the other two types of SC.

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