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# Social capital, inequality and stratification: class and social relations in Spain

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## Résumé

This paper focuses on the study of the unequal distribution of social capital considering not only formal contacts and associative belonging but also analyzing the set of networks that a person has and the resources that can be extracted from them (individual social capital). In the first block, based on a general explanatory model of individual social capital determinants, we propose a series of hypotheses about the distribution of social networks endowments. In the empirical study, we analyze the inequalities in terms of social networks and resource mobilization capacity (social returns) from an extensive survey of Spanish society. The results demonstrate both strong inequality (notably greater than the income) and the direct link between this and the economic and human capital endowment. Patterns of social capital, therefore, tend to reflect or even perpetuate the stratification patterns of society. Some previous studies have shown how social stratification is an important element in understanding social capital distribution both at a national and at individual level (Hall, 1999 and 2002; Pichler and Wallace, 2007 and 2009; Schafer and Vargas, 2016). However, the scope of these studies is limited because of the narrow definition of social capital (most of them centered on social participation indicators), dismissing the differences of distribution of resource-oriented networks between socioeconomic groups. For example, studies developed during the last crisis have remarked the central role that the family and strong links had on the working class and, at the same time, the lack of weak links, social support, and even associationism in this group (Jaraíz, Vidal et al. 2014).

From our perspective, it is necessary to study how social class is related to social capital in a large-scale analysis considering not only voluntary associations but also general social networks and social resources mobilized through them. With the aim of overcoming these limitations, this paper contributes to this empirical literature on the inequality of the distribution of social capital, not only considering formal contacts and associative belonging, but analyzing particularly the set of networks that a person has and the resources that can be extracted from them, the so-called individual social capital. More specifically, our approach allows us to show how this form of capital aggravates inequality and auto-reproduces class differences in a kind of Matthew effect with other capital expressions.

In order to analyze the inequalities generated in the second section, we reconsider both the problem of interrelation between social capital and class and Lin's explanatory proposal on social capital inequality. This allows us to derive two hypotheses on the process of social capitalization that support Bourdieu's perspective on the reproduction of class conditions. In the third section, we contrast our hypothesis with a survey on inequality in Spanish society

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where we study personal networks and the quantification of the total amount of social resources available and potentially mobilizable. We analyze in this part, inequality indicators, class distribution and the explanatory determinants of this unequal distribution. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

**Mots-Clés:** Individual social capital, inequality, class reproduction, social stratification.