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From an HRD Perspective
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The Role of Reflective Practices in Building Social Capital in Organizations From an HRD Perspective

Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura¹ and Lyle Yorks¹

Abstract
Social capital has been receiving increasing attention in the field of human resource development (HRD). However, little is known as to how social capital has been formed or has grown over time with HRD interventions. There is limited research and discussion on how reflective practices play a role in the development of social capital as individuals reflect together in interactive social contexts such as networking activities. This article looks at how reflective practices can inform organizational social capital building. This article reviews relevant social capital and reflective practices literatures. An integrative model of institutional social capital and reflective practices is introduced to help explain how the two areas can be interrelated. The article suggests future efforts to integrate research and practice to better develop social capital in organizations.

Keywords
social capital, reflective practices, human resource development

The purpose of this article is to examine institutional social capital in light of collective reflective practices through relevant literature reviews. With this purpose in mind, the following question is raised in this article: How does organizational social capital

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involve reflective practices from a human resource development (HRD) perspective? As will be discussed below, the literatures on social capital have focused on the social structure and social relations aspect of building social capital. Similarly, the literature on reflection has emphasized the role of reflection for enabling individual and team learning. Integrating the core concepts of these two streams of literature reveals how reflective practices can enhance both the sustainability and utility of social capital interventions. Accordingly, this article discusses social capital in light of adult learning theory including individual and collective reflective practices. An integrative model of institutional social capital and reflective practices is introduced to help explain how the two areas can be interrelated. Last, implications for future HRD practice and research with social capital and reflective practices perspectives will be discussed. This article therefore explores areas that may benefit HRD, with future research steps suggested in the area of social capital for HRD practices.

The HRD Need for Integrating Social Capital and Reflective Practices

American organizations spent approximately US$134 billion on employee learning and development in 2008, with more than US$88 billion spent on the internal learning function and approximately US$45 billion spent on external services such as seminars and workshops (Paradise, 2009). While HRD professionals recognize continuing needs for such developmental support, how do they facilitate executives’ social capital formation processes as part of their human resource development efforts?

In today’s rapidly changing world, social networks are critical for executives to successfully carry out their business (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Social networks provide executives with access to a variety of resources. The concept of social capital has been discussed and examined by a growing number of scholars and researchers in terms of how social capital influences executives both individually and organizationally as a result of network relationships. Social capital can be seen as actual and potential resources in and from network relationships developed by individuals or social units (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social networks are social structures made of nodes (individuals, groups, or organizations) that are joined by various interactions such as business and personal relationships (Tichy, Tushman, & Fombrum, 1979). A variety of scholars and researchers illuminate social capital impact on performance effectiveness in diverse business settings (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Borgelt & Falk, 2007; Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Tansley & Newell, 2007). Examples of such business settings include information technology firms such as software companies (Mu, Peng, & Love, 2008; Stam & Elfring, 2008), pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturing firms (Somaya, Williamson, & Lorinkava, 2008), and professional services firms as exemplified by bankers’ social capital (Burt, 2007).

Social capital has been increasingly considered from HRD perspectives by scholars and researchers (Storberg, 2002, 2007; Zhang, Zheng, & Wei, 2009). As a critical organizational success factor, there is a need for HRD professionals to facilitate social
capital building among members in organizations by improving the interactivity between individuals (Hatala, 2006; Holton & Yamkovenko, 2008). HRD interventions for social networks can change relationships between people to enhance effectiveness in the multiple levels of organizations (individuals, groups, and organizations) that leads to knowledge creation and sharing, learning, social support, group problem solving, and the like (Storberg & Gubbins, 2007; Yorks, 2005). HRD professionals can target interventions to identify and strengthen links of informational resource chains among disconnected groups, identify influential persons in the network as change agents, and help develop diverse connections between junior and senior executives and across functions. Such HRD interventions include training programs, workshops, social activities, setting up improved learning environments, or providing opportunities and situations to enhance productivity and effectiveness for executives’ development (Gubbins & Garavan, 2009; Manderscheid, 2008; Storberg & Gubbins, 2007).

However, little is known as to how social capital has been formed or has grown over time with such organizational interventions. As individuals maintain and start to form social capital, they engage in reflective dialogue. There is limited research and discussion surrounding how reflective practices play a role in the development of social capital as individuals reflect together in social contexts where people interact with one another, such as networking activities (Høyrup & Elkjaer, 2006). In fact, the value of reflective practices is often neglected in today’s workplace (Gray, 2007). In organizational settings, the work is so demanding that individuals are unable to invest their time on reflective activities. Another thing to note is that the history of social capital theory highlights mostly structural and relational aspects (described later in this article). Yet the idea of social capital building can better explain how interactivity involves collective reflections in the development of social capital. As people interact during their networking activities, dialogue happens. Reflective dialogue can affect the ways of thinking, suspend assumptions, and begin collective thinking processes (Mezirow, 2000; Senge, 1990). People can share ideas with each other through dialogue that contributes to insight exchanges and the creation of knowledge (Le Cornu, 2009; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008).

Therefore, a concept of reflective practices can better inform interactivities during social capital construction. To better understand the implications of this integration, the next two sections will develop social capital theory and reflective practices by reviewing each field. After we have seen the elements of both fields in greater detail, this article will discuss how the two fields can be effectively integrated to better explain interactivities in the development of social capital.

**Social Capital**

The idea of social capital initially appeared in 1916 as a concept in school community centers, focusing on trust, cooperation, and collective action for better functioning communities (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Since then, social capital theory has become increasingly popular among scholars, writers, and business executives in a variety of
fields who understand it using different disciplines. Included are a sociological inter-
personal relationship perspective (Coleman, 1998), and political, institutional, and eco-
nomic points of view (Putnam, 1995). The emergence of social capital theory can be
ascribed to organizational theorists and researchers who identify social capital as a use-
ful resource of individual or social units obtained through social interactions focusing
on benefits for organizations and individuals in business settings (Burt, 1992; Cohen &
Prusak, 2001; Lin, 2001; Walter, Lechner, & Kellermanns, 2007).

The main dimensions of social capital include social structure and social relations. Social
structure exists in any social context that creates social capital among people. Social
structure can be seen as a pattern of connections among people that is deeply
and mainly dependent on the condition of the field concepts of network ties and
network configurations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social relations focuses on the
particular relationships people have with one another, characterized by factors such as
respect and friendship, and which deeply influence their behavior (Lin, 2001). Table 1
lists relevant elements by selected theorists. The table shows which aspects of struc-
tural and relational dimensions are discussed by each scholar.

**Social Structure**

The structural dimension refers to the pattern of the connections between individuals
in a given group. This dimension has two major facets: network ties and network
configurations. Social structure is deeply influenced by the presence or absence of
these two components (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

**Network ties.** A number of theorists include this essential feature in the development
of social capital (see Table 1). There are five key facets of network ties that enable indi-
viduals to form social capital. They are access, timing, referrals, stability, and space.
Functional network ties require ease of access, consistent timing, and quality referrals
(Burt, 1992). It is important to have access to useful information, to know the best per-
son to approach without wasting time, and to be able to provide information on available
opportunities to other people in the given network. Inkpen and Tsang (2005) discuss
how important it is to have consistent members stay in their networks. They refer to the
case of high turnover rates in organizations. If individuals frequently leave a network,
they take their knowledge with them, which damages the group’s social capital.

Time is also stressed as an important element for the development of social capital
because all forms of social capital depend on stability and continuity of the social
structure (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Without enough time, it is hard to build trust.
Relationship stability and durability are key features associated with high levels of
trust and norms of cooperation. Cohen and Prusak (2001) point out the importance of
time in building trusting relationships for social capital as well. They are aware that it
is difficult for busy people today to take the time to develop social relationships even
though they recognize the value that personal meetings can generate. Therefore, one
can expect to see social capital increase dramatically after a certain length of introdus-
tory time. The importance of space is discussed among a number of scholars and
Table 1. List of Elements by Theorist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Social structure</th>
<th>Social relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network ties</td>
<td>Configurations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman (1998)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burt (1992)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putnam (1995)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leana and Van Buren (1999)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen and Prusak (2001)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin (2001)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adler and Kwon (2002)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolino, Turnley, and Bloodgood (2002)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gubbins and Garavan (2005)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kessels and Poell (2004)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoemaker and Johker (2004)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inkpen and Tsang (2005)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman, Hoelscher, and Sherif (2005)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks and Nafukho (2006)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith (2006)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter, Lechner, and Kellermanns (2007)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (2009)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

researchers (Mason, Castieman, & Parker, 2008; McCallum & O’Connell, 2008; Mebane, Porcelli, Iannone, Attanasio, & Francescato, 2008). Space can include both physical and virtual places where people can interact such as coffee lounges and online classrooms. These scholars insist that social spaces facilitate people’s interaction and make them trust one another enough to exchange valuable information. As network ties are built largely on trust, and the development of trust involves space and time, information transmission will only occur reliably via network channels after such conditions have been met.

Network configurations. Once network ties are established, the structure of the resulting network configurations determines the degree of social capital that members share
(Adler & Kwon, 2002; Gubbins & Garavan, 2005; Walter et al., 2007). Coleman (1988) uses the word closure (p. 105) to describe the strength of individuals’ networks. Depending on how strong the network is, their norms and trust in others are deeply influenced. In a more open network configuration, violations of norms are more likely to go undetected. The individuals are less trusting of one another, which leads to an overall weakening of social capital. Adler and Kwon (2002) describe closure as providing social capital’s cohesiveness benefits within an organization or community.

Interestingly, Burt (1992) stresses that dense networks are inefficient in the sense that they return less diverse information for the same cost. In other words, a dense network interferes with the flow of diverse information and knowledge. It is noted that dense ties are efficient for sharing resources where individuals must have high levels of trust and shared views, whereas weak ties enable individuals to obtain new knowledge and ideas from new sources. The more dense a group network, the more likely that the network members work with tacit knowledge in the form of unspoken and mutually understood language with one another. Information flow is effective among the individuals with shared tacit knowledge, whereas the lack of shared tacit knowledge may interfere with obtaining new information from outside of a network as misunderstandings may occur in moving the information across groups. For instance, an executive who is familiar with the tacit knowledge in a network has an advantage in sharing a new idea because he can interpret and communicate the new idea to make it attractive to the group.

However, the weaker the tie, the more likely individuals in a network will have access to others outside of the network for new resources. Adler and Kwon (2002) support Burt’s assertion and focus on external networks. They claim that it is difficult for people to develop social capital that links them with those outside of the network if the existing network is too dense to explore new resources. In essence, the configuration of a network is important in how social capital is formed, what kind is formed, and how individuals are able to access it.

**Social Relations**

Personal relationships are developed among people through a history of interactions (Gibbons, 2004; Ingram & Zou, 2008). As Table 1 shows, the major elements of social relations are trust, norms, obligations and expectations, and identification.

**Trust.** As Table 1 indicates, many theorists emphasize the importance of trust in the development of social capital. Trust exists where there is a belief in the good intent of exchange partners as well as a belief in their competence and capability and their perceived openness (Chua, Ingram, & Morris, 2008; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Nielsen & Nielsen, 2009). Trust indicates greater openness to the potential for value creation through exchange and combination. Inkpen and Tsang (2005) argue that network members are willing to share their knowledge with each other when trust is high. This level of trust can lead to organizational advantages. Trust, accordingly, lubricates cooperation and breeds further trust. This accrual of trust may lead to the development over time of
generalized norms of cooperation, which further increase the willingness to engage in social exchange. It is clearly important to have trust to develop social capital.

**Norms.** Norms exist when the socially defined right to control an action is held by the actor and by others (Coleman, 1998). Social sanctioning is what distinguishes norms from other cultural products or social constructions such as meaning and values. Norms affect a variety of human behavior. Leana and Van Buren (1999) argue that organizations can facilitate the creation of norms to promote social capital among their members. For example, an organization can demonstrate its values by rewarding people. Promotion decisions send a signal to organizational members about the kinds of activities and habits of practice that are valued by the organization. Similarly, Hoffman, Hoelscher, and Sherif (2005) argue that social norms contain the shared knowledge and history of an organization. Such norms illustrate the accumulated history of the organization and are productively used by members of the network. Thus, norms are seen as critical features in developing social networks.

**Expectations and obligations.** Obligations represent a commitment or duty to undertake some activity in the future when individuals receive the resources from others (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Obligations only exist where people trust each other in certain social environments wherein they recognize that sharing resources with each other is their responsibility (Coleman, 1990). Hoffman et al. (2005) see expectations and obligations as interdependent. They further explain that expectations lead members to be more willing to work for the group, and they expect that the group in turn will work for them.

**Identification.** This is the process by which individuals identify themselves with another person or group of people (Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Identity facilitates people to exchange knowledge (Hoffman et al., 2005). For example, if people have a sense of strong identity as part of their organization, they tend to collectively act together and effectively exchange their resources, actions which can bring increasingly effective performance.

**Impacts, Outcomes, and Advantages**

As described in the previous section, both structural and relational dimensions are required for social networks. As a result of social networking, people can obtain valued assets—social capital—for improved performance. Benefits of social capital can be categorized to include three dimensions (Table 2): impacts on individuals (short term), outcomes for individuals (long term), and advantages for the organization (short and long term) that are ascribed to social capital among salient theoretical literatures.

**Impacts on individuals.** Social capital facilitates access to broader sources of information and improves information quality, relevance, and timeliness, which helps enhance the outcomes of action (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Brooks & Nafukho, 2006; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Lin, 2001). Network members clearly benefit when accessing useful resources through social networks, saving time without spending a tremendous amount of effort to locate information. Social structure generates the pipe whereby people can
Table 2. Social Capital Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impacts on individuals</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Access to information (information quality, relevance, and timeliness); sense of identity/belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for individuals</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Career development; higher performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages to the organization</td>
<td>Short and long term</td>
<td>Leadership development; improved efficiency; achieve objectives &amp; goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

connect in the organization, while at the same time people see the value in the pipe that facilitates them investing in social relations development (Storberg, 2009). Moreover, social relations are expected to reinforce identity and recognition (Lin, 2001). Being assured of and recognized for one’s worth as an individual and a member of a social group provides not only emotional support but also public acknowledgement of one’s claim to certain resources. These reinforcements are essential for the maintenance of mental health and one’s entitlement to social network resources.

Outcomes for individuals. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) illustrate how social capital facilitates individuals’ and groups’ abilities to combine or exchange their own knowledge and experiences for further personal growth and professional development. Through social interactions, people exchange their knowledge, ideas, opinions, and experiences by sharing a common language or code. In addition, individuals have a chance to reflect on their present selves and on their ideal selves through social capital processes (Smith, 2006). When social capital provides opportunities to learn about new things, of which people were previously unaware, they can start envisioning various elements and possibilities in themselves. When they start exploring possibilities regarding their ideal selves, others in their networks support them with valuable feedback for overcoming weaknesses as well as in building on strengths. Sufficient social capital can help individuals improve performance and obtain greater job satisfaction, stronger self-esteem, earlier career promotion, and higher salaries (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). This is understandable because such people most likely are able to obtain information earlier than others and show interest in the right places and at the right times to capitalize on exclusive opportunities.

Advantages to the organization. Social capital provides organizations with advantages in supporting the development of better leaders and managers (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Nakamura, 2010). Individuals in organizations receive benefits more directly and can thus contribute to organizational effectiveness and improved business results as a whole (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Social capital in an organization can also facilitate individuals’ access to knowledge and resources that enhance organizational competitive advantage (Hitt, Keats, & Yucel, 2003; Hung, Lien, & McLean, 2009; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).
Summary: Social Capital Literature

The review of social capital literatures shows the nature of social capital, including critical aspects of social structure, social relations, and its benefits. More specifically, a careful reading of the literature demonstrates the critical connections between social structure and relations. For example, how aspects of social relations, such as trust and identification, and network configuration potentially interact to influence the benefits realized. However, a question still remains as to how social capital has been formed in a way that facilitates this interaction from a learning perspective. The rest of this article explores the ways in which social capital can be constructed incorporating reflective practices.

Reflective Practices

The concept of reflection is deeply rooted in learning from experience theory. People learn from experience either in their daily lives, in formal classroom settings, and/or in informal learning environments. According to Dewey (1938), learning from experience is a continuous process that involves an interaction between individuals and their environments. Daudelin (1996) says that learning from experience is the act of developing insights from past events and applying them to future actions. Dewey (1938) explains that the process of reflection proceeds when people have “a state of doubt, hesitancy, perplexity, or mental difficulty” about their experience (p. 130). However, other theorists such as Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) maintain that reflection occurs when people have not only negative but also positive feelings about their experiences. In the business context, for instance, we often analyze challenging business situations and experiences and summarize our learning in reports. Reflective processes including self- and collective reflection, as well as selected reflective tools, are discussed in this section.

There are a variety of ways to participate in reflective processes. According to Schön (1991), this participation includes two reflective practices: first, reflection-in-action, and second, reflection-on-action. Both can occur as people face problems or challenges and try to solve or improve them. Reflection-in-action means that people reflect while they are experiencing actions. Reflection-on-action, however, refers to individuals reflecting on actions they took, focusing on reasons for the acts and results of the acts. Self-reflection happens as individuals internally try to make meaning of incidents and the associated actions they take based on their personal experiences (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008).

Reflection does not have to be performed individually (Boud et al., 1985). Daudelin (1996) explains that reflection with others can occur with one other person or in small groups. In business environments, collective reflection may exist in workgroups, across workgroups, or across organizations. Groups may not be permanent or fixed, causing people to come together for different purposes. Individuals often discuss
challenging situations or problems with those who have greater experience in pertinent matters such as immediate supervisors, mentors, colleagues, or friends. When reflection takes place in a small group, ideas are generated by the sharing of different perspectives. While one person is sharing his or her experience, others in the group are relating information relevant to their own challenges. These collective reflections can be done not only through physical contacts but also in virtual interactive spaces where individuals can discuss their workplace problems, exchange their insights, and reflect on their professional practices (Allan, 2007). Group reflection can also occur not only through purposefully designed formal situations but also through informal problem-solving contexts (Schenkel, 2006). Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that group reflection occurs when a group of people who have a common interest in some subject or problem share ideas and find solutions and build innovations by collaborating over an extended period.

From the collective perspective, reflective dialogue among adults can affect their ways of thinking (Mezirow, 2000). According to Senge (1990), dialogue is an essential component for learning when individuals suspend assumptions and start thinking together. People can share ideas with each other through dialogue using common language (Le Cornu, 2009; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008). Shared meaning or understanding is developed through words, images, metaphors, and actions as a result of continuous dialogue among individuals. Such dialogue contributes to insight exchanges and the creation of knowledge. Considering organizational settings, effective and productive dialogue is fostered when there is open and transparent communication among individuals. In other words, organizational norms that promote exchanging ideas and concerns for improved business performance can lead to better outcomes. In addition, according to Cressey, Boud, and Docherty (2006), reflection with others is productive as people can point out limitations and activities that the learner had overlooked or of which they were not aware. As a collective reflection process, dialogue takes place in a context of ambiguity because there is a lack of clarity or consistency regarding factors such as values, goals, intentions, limits, and authority. Bjerlov and Docherty (2006) illustrate that collective reflection helps to reduce ambiguity in uncertain situations.

Reflective practices embody learning processes as people interact and effectively share ideas and opinions as well as when they discuss possible solutions (Cressey, 2006; Høyrup, 2004). Gray (2007) discusses tools to promote reflective practices efficiently considering the limited time that executives can use for reflection in today’s rapidly changing business world. These tools include story telling, reflective journaling, reflecting on critical incidents, and the like. Story telling as a tool helps individuals to share meanings explicitly so that people can understand the story. Reflective journals can be personal and unstructured products of reflective personal anecdotes, stories, or descriptions of work-related problems. Reflective journals contain self-evaluations that help when reconstructing values. Furthermore, reflecting on critical incidents provides opportunities to interpret the significance of everyday business events.

In sum, reflective practices play an important organizational role. As described above, the field of learning from experience illuminates the importance of reflection.
Some scholars emphasize that reflection can occur collectively and that dialogue is a critical component in reflective practices as a part of learning processes.

**Social Capital (Structure and Relations) With Reflective Practices**

Reflection happens when individuals interact with one another in particular situations or conditions such as during networking events or in-house seminars. As people maintain and start to form social capital they engage in dialogue that helps foster their new ideas or solutions stimulated by engaging different perspectives. Structural and relational aspects of social capital and reflective practices can be explained as interrelated to one another to form and maintain social capital for improved performance and effectiveness in organizations.

As described in the Social Capital section, time as a structural aspect is critical for individuals to develop trusting relationships. Spending time together makes people comfortable enough to share ideas and opinions as collective reflective practices. The more time people spend together, the better stable relationships that can be developed in which they can practice collective reflection. The stable network enables them to more than merely exchange information. Rather, they can start critically reflecting on their assumptions and values that generate ideas and insights coming from different perspectives. Physical or virtual social spaces provide opportunities for dialogue between individuals to engage in reflective practices as well.

In addition to the structural dimension of network ties, the strength of networks affect collective reflective practices. Strong ties can facilitate individuals to collectively reflect to share insights and knowledge because of high levels of trust. As the relational aspect of social capital emphasizes the importance of trust, people can have open and transparent dialogue when trust is high. A trusting condition can create a certain norm (as a part of relational aspects of social capital) of sharing insights as a result of collective reflective practice. It becomes a norm for people to engage in collective reflections to obtain insights due to its value in increasing social capital. Accordingly, people in the network see having reflective dialogue for sharing insights as their obligation and expectation (as a part of developing the relational aspects of social capital). A norm of sharing insights makes people feel obligated to engage in reflective dialogue and share their insights. Similarly, they expect other members to collectively reflect on their assumptions. Furthermore, if people have the same identity as part of the member network, they tend to feel comfortable enough to collectively reflect together and to effectively exchange their resources.

HRD interventions can help individuals engage in reflective activities on social capital construction if their design incorporates three elements of social capital building (reflective practices, social structure, and social relations). The examples below are illustrative of lessons drawn from the literature that have stimulated our thinking regarding the value of researching connections among the three elements of capital building. Executive education programs are one kind of intervention that can
potentially facilitate reflective practices in the development of social capital. For example, Yorks, Beechler, and Ciporen (2007) discuss effectiveness of reflective practices for enhance learning in an open enrollment senior executive program. Everyday reflection time is explicitly included in the design of the program that enables reflective practices to become daily habits for executives. The program is also designed to maximize interactions between the participants that foster trusting relationships. There are postprogram activities that reinforce social structure and relations developed in the program. The interview data revealed that collective reflective practices at the program facilitated the participants to exchange their thoughts and opinions. The collective reflective practices fostered trusting relationships as the participants learned new perspectives and insights from each other, which strengthened the networks long after the program concluded. As a result, the participants keep exchanging insights and developing social capital.

Action learning is another effective HRD intervention that can foster reflective practices. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a collaborative action inquiry project with a particular emphasis on team learning through reflection. Collaborative space was provided to facilitate reflective dialogue among the team members that helped build social capital (Kowalski, Harmon, Yorks, & Kowalski, 2003; Yorks, Neuman, Kowalski, & Kowalski, 2007). The provided collaborative social space enabled the team members to share their experiences and thoughts. They were successfully able to work on problem solving together by critically reflecting on the challenges that they faced in their workplace. Through the project, each member’s experiences, knowledge, and insights became their social capital. Strong network connections continue to exist among many of the participants in this project providing social capital that has been beneficial even they move on to other jobs.

An additional example of action learning is in how the global organization, Grace Cocoa, successfully built social capital among the senior executives through reflective practices as part of an action reflection learning project. The team action reflection learning refers to small groups that work on solving real problems through repeated cycles of action and reflection (Dennis, Cederholm, & Yorks, 1996; Yorks, O’Neil, Marsick, Nilson, & Kolodny, 1996). The organization, Grace Cocoa, faced a challenge of merging three companies into one as the organization purchased Ambrosia Chocolate in the United States and Cacao De Zaan in Holland. To accomplish the goal, a leadership forum was provided for the senior executives across functions and units constantly to meet and interact with each other. The interactive opportunities fostered dialogue among the executives. They critically reflected and changed the scope of their thinking and started seeing the business globally as opposed to their own local unit. Considering the transformative changes in their perspective on their organization, the participants commented that they were able to develop a global network with facilitating change, which enabled them to restructure from a divisional organization to a globally functional one. This major strategic reorganization took place following and around the establishment of informal organizational ties created in the program and social capital that was created facilitated the change process.
Leadership summits, as another category of HRD intervention, are also an effective place for reflective practices on social capital building. For example, a global professional services firm facilitates networking activities among newly promoted partners around the globe (Nakamura, 2010). The organization provides an annual leadership summit whereby the leaders can get to know each other, share best practices, and exchange insights, perspectives, and values. In the leadership summit, the participants are encouraged to invest their time in collective reflection by sharing their business practices with one another. Through the reflective practices, they developed their social capital that helps them cultivate new business and lead international business projects by collaborating with other leaders.

The common themes of the examples above show that interactive spaces can facilitate collective reflective practices. The spaces provided interactive opportunities that allowed the members constantly to spend time together. This helped the participants to engage in dialogue and collective reflective practices. These activities facilitated building social networks. Through the networking activities, people started seeing the value in others’ insights and thoughts for improved performance and business results.

In essence, network ties such as time, stability, and space are required for people to engage in collective reflective practices. Collective reflective practices are deeply affected by the strength of networks (configurations) as they can facilitate critical reflections. The relational dimension of social capital (trust, norms, obligations and expectations, and identification) needs to be in place for people to collective reflect as well. HRD professionals need to consider all three components: structure, relations, and reflective practice to facilitate social capital building. For example, HRD professionals can set up a seminar for a certain group of people that gives a space for individuals to interact and time for interactions that foster trusting relationships. The seminar may foster reflective dialogue by assigning people to work on the group project. Therefore, reflective practices and social capital (structure and relations) which are deeply related to each other can be fostered through HRD interventions.

An Organizational Social Capital with HRD Interventions Model

Considering the interactive nature of social capital among individuals, reflective practices can be seen as an important component in networking activities. Figure 1 illustrates how social structure, social relations, and reflective practices can function as three elements that are influencing with one another in the construction of social capital. It also indicates that the three elements affect potential social capital growth that can provide benefits classified as impacts on individuals, outcomes for individuals, and advantages to organizations. Organization-led events as HRD interventions designed to facilitate the construction of social capital are situated above the three elements of social capital building. HRD interventions can promote these three elements: relational, structural, and reflective aspects that can help create resources known as social capital with three benefits: impacts, outcomes, and advantages within the
organization. Without HRD’s efforts at promoting relations, structures, and reflections, these three elements lose balance so that social capital benefits may not effectively be generated in the organization. The three elements in Figure 1 also indicate that each component affects one another; thus, they cannot be stand-alones for organizational social capital growth. From a structural perspective, individuals’ interactivities create interactive patterns or determine the network’s density conditions. Such social structural conditions deeply relate to how the individuals reflect collectively or individually after their interactions. For instance, individuals of a network who have strong ties have a high level of trust and a strong norm (social relations). With the strong ties and relations, an individual’s ideas are effectively exchanged and knowledge is created through collective reflective practices. In the meantime, as people engage in reflective dialogue, their interpersonal relationships are built (known as social relations) and are influenced by the structural conditions of the network. Therefore, these three components (structure, relations, and reflections) are indeed influenced to one another. The three together can be promoted through HRD interventions and can lead to the benefits of social capital as shown in Figure 1.

Implications for Future HRD Research

This review investigated how HRD professionals can better inform executives as to social capital construction processes through attention to, if not the utilization of,
reflective practices. This exploration has identified areas whereby reflection can fit into social capital interventions that drive organizational benefits.

We find the above examples drawn from documented HRD interventions stimulating and compelling but admittedly anecdotal. Reflective practices as an adult learning perspective should be incorporated in future research on social capital. One can examine how and in what ways reflection affects the type of social capital benefit—such as an impact, outcome, or advantage. At the same time, the research can examine what kinds of HRD interventions can foster reflection from which social capital benefits accrue. In other words, social capital can be measured by what patterns or kinds of reflective interactions among people involve deeper analysis and the generation of ideas and insights. Figure 1 depicts reflective practices as potentially and directly contributing to the social capital benefits by interrelating with structural and relational dimensions of social capital. HRD interventions can thus promote all three components (reflective practices, structural and relational dimensions of social capital). For example, reflective practices may become involved when individuals engage in the process of sharing ideas and opinions and discussing solutions and next steps as a long-term outcome. Through interactions with others in forming social capital, people start envisioning various elements and possibilities about their challenges or problems. Therefore, future research can inform how and to what extent reflection drives each category of benefits.

The relationship between social relations elements and reflection can be further researched. For instance, the social capital literature discusses the importance of building trusting relationships in the development of social capital (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Network members are willing to share their knowledge with each other when trust is high (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). This indicates that reflection may not meaningfully occur if there is a lack of trust between individuals. For instance, an Executive Education program that promoted interactions throughout the program and facilitates collectively reflective practices among the participants helped foster trusting relationships (Yorks et al., 2007). Future research can help measure the relationship between trust (as a component of social relations) and reflective practices as it may inform organizational theory.

From the structural perspective, reflective practices can be examined as to how the structural dimension affects reflective practices. The future research can inform how reflective practices can be affected by the condition of network ties—strong or weak. As described in the earlier section, strong or dense ties create effective flow of resources and generate knowledge to be shared among the network members, while they return less diverse information and less opportunities for obtaining new knowledge and ideas from new sources (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1992).

In addition, the cognitive aspect of social capital can be viewed in terms of its relationship with reflective practices. The cognitive component is examined by some scholars (Anderson, 2008; Lee, 2009; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), yet cognitive aspects of social capital research is limited (Lee & Jones, 2008). The cognitive dimension refers to individual attributes in communication (Storberg, 2009). It can also be seen as the individual’s ability to communicate with others. Speaking of communication,
the cognitive dimension includes shared meaning and understanding (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005), also known as shared codes, language, and narratives (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). People communicate by sharing understandings and interpretations (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This dimension highlights the fact that people interact with one another by sharing common values as well as a frame of reference (Lee & Jones, 2008). People in an organization, for instance, communicate smoothly with their particular organization-wide language as a natural by-product of organizational themes and messages, organizations’ product terminology, and associated stories in the development of products and processes.

The aspects of cognitive social capital described above are interrelated with the concept of reflection. That is, shared meaning or understanding through dialogue using common language is a component of reflective practices (Le Cornu, 2009; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008). Yet reflective practices can demand a deeper level of facilitating and promotion of one’s interactivities to help generate insights and as a result support individuals’ development and growth. Experiencing in-house training programs as HRD interventions can be explained as an example. As people experience learning during training, sharing newly learned knowledge and information, each individual’s cognitive differences can affect collective reflective practices when they interact with each other, an area that can be further discussed and examined by the learners. Hence, there appears room to research how both cognitive and reflective elements can reinforce each other and by extension the impact on social capital construction.

There are implications for researching the design of action learning programs as well. For example, distinctions between tacit, scientific, experiential, and critical reflection action learning programs have been described in the literature (Marsick & O’Neil, 1999; O’Neil & Marsick, 2007; Yorks, O’Neil, & Marsick, 1999). How, if at all, different designs of action learning programs affect social capital formation, and role played by reflection, is an area of research with implications for both action learning and social capital theory.

Virtual interactions that build social capital are a growing research area (McCallum & O’Connell, 2008). Challenges and opportunities regarding online interactions for social capital construction should be continuously researched as we become increasingly dependent on rapidly changing information technology. While Putnam (2000) discusses how virtual communication can decrease social capital, other scholars shed some light on virtual interactions’ positive impact on social capital (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; Mason et al., 2008; McCallum & O’Connell, 2008; Mebane et al., 2008). Wellman, Haase, Witte, and Hampton (2001), for instance, indicate that social capital construction is facilitated by virtual communication as an extended resource of face-to-face interactions. Mason et al. (2008) emphasize virtual communication as a powerful tool for knowledge sharing. Virtual interactions enable people to communicate virtually, which facilitates knowledge sharing and engagement in their networks. This productive virtual interactivity holds especially in circumstances where people are not physically working together in the same space. Whether separated by or within offices, buildings, and local or global areas, virtual communication provides opportunities for
people to interact and exchange their knowledge. Research on how organizations use virtual communications for enhanced social capital should be further explored.

Last, risks and costs can be researched as to how social capital formation processes using collective reflective practices are influenced. Social capital investments may not be cost-effective in certain situations. Social relationships need time, energy, and attention to establish and maintain (Akdere & Roberts, 2008; Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Efforts are required to develop new relationships, shared language, and shared experiences, and to then integrate the information gained from the relationships. In addition, strong group ties may negatively affect group effectiveness (Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). Strong socializing ties may limit interactions with others outside of the groups because a group creates a high boundary of strong norms within itself. For example, highly cohesive management teams that engage in poor decision making rarely think of alternative ideas and actions. The power benefits of social capital can come as a trade-off against information benefits (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Therefore, the balance between the positive and negative aspects of social relations is important. The research can illuminate how people can balance time, energy, and efforts, optimizing reflective practices for their diverse and continuously evolving social capital. Clearly, there appears a tremendous opportunity for in-depth research in the area of social capital from the reflective practices perspective.

Implications for Future HRD Practice

HRD professionals can facilitate social capital construction and maintenance among executives for improved performance and organizational competitive advantage. Executives effectively exchange their information and resources through the support of social capital formation. HRD facilitators who understand the importance of social capital can successfully support social networking activities for their organizational leaders (Gubbins & Garavan, 2009). Aligning with organizational goals and strategies, HRD practitioners need to collaborate across departments and offices to effectively intervene and develop relevant social structures as well as to enhance individuals’ social relations for organizational social capital gains. They can facilitate social capital formation processes through various and mixed methods.

Reflection is important for learning and development. However, norms in organizations tend to devalue reflective practices (Gray, 2007). Providing opportunities for individuals to have places to interact and reflect with each other is one simple, yet essential, means to this end (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Possible HRD efforts can include a series of workshops or seminars where individuals can take learning journeys together, both physical and virtual spaces for people to meet and interact such as through common coffee lounges and online chat rooms, and social interactive activities including cocktail receptions whereby people casually interact with one another. These activities can promote reflective practices as individuals may have opportunities to participate in storytelling (Gray, 2007) and develop shared meanings as they spend some time together.
Considering the social structure dimension of social capital, contact points available within an organization can help people get in touch efficiently and enhance the smooth flow of information. Examples may include specific individual or team email addresses, telephone numbers, virtual water coolers, and interactive profiles pages.

Disseminating basic knowledge about the value of networks is another way to spur awareness and norms surrounding networking activities (Burt, 2007). People in organizations can learn to see networks as assets that help improve social relational aspects and performance. Mazutis and Slawinski (2008) illustrate that open and transparent dialogue can help people toward a continuously reflective self-awareness of their values and beliefs that uncovers knowledge and new insights. To construct and sustain a supportive environment valuing networks as a part of organizational norms, HRD can foster open and transparent communication among individuals that helps them to hold effective dialogue. Coaches, mentors, or facilitators can be used to purposefully facilitate interactive activities for productive collaborative reflective practices. Hezlett and Gibson (2007) state that HRD professionals can implement mentoring that helps foster social relationships among individuals in the organization. Coaching can facilitate individuals’ reflections as well (Joo, 2005). Constant leadership messages that suggest the value of networks and networking would be another way to establish an organizational norm of commonplace social capital formation processes.

HRD can also play a critical leadership development role. New leaders value networks that enable them to support each other, helping dispel potential feelings of leadership isolation (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007). To make a smooth transition, HRD can provide leadership development programs focusing on building networks that help leaders overcome anxieties, building their confidence through constructing their networks. These programs or workshops can provide opportunities whereby individuals feel a sense of belonging as they share the same experiences. The sense of belonging helps individuals to identify themselves as a part of the member network. As identity is one of the critical components within the social relations aspect of social capital, this sense of belonging can be a strong support for social capital formation processes. Trusting relationships are fostered through sharing the same experiences while attending the leadership development program as well. These trusting relationships help to start building bridges among individuals with greater openness to the potential for value creation through exchange and combination.

Last, virtual communication venues hold tremendous potential to better equip organizational executives with resources to build and maintain social capital (McCallum & O’Connell, 2008). HRD can provide employees with virtual interactive opportunities such as chat features, blogging, online interactive workshops, and the like. At the same time, HRD can set up and maintain online infrastructure for people to search for and reach out to each other whenever necessary. Examples of online infrastructure can include online contact directories and organizational knowledge databases (e.g., organizational product information, best practices of executing projects, and client relationships building and management tips and hints, etc.).
Thus, HRD interventions in support of social structure and social relations can be a powerful means to enhance individual, team, and organizational effectiveness (Storberg & Gubbins, 2007).

**Conclusion**

This article has explored adult learning aspects focusing on reflective practices that can occur during HRD interventions in the development of social capital. Referring back to the question, “How does organizational social capital involve reflective practices from an HRD perspective?” it is clear that reflective practices and two major components of social capital (structure and relations) can be productively interrelated to each other. Collective reflective practices can strengthen networks. People become comfortable enough to share knowledge through collective reflective practices as they develop strong network ties. HRD can provide opportunities for collective reflective practices such as through seminars and workshops where people can develop trusting relationships with one another. As the integrative model shows, HRD professionals can facilitate social capital building by taking all three components—structure, relations, and reflective practice—into consideration. An integrative approach that includes experience and reflective practices holds the potential to provide HRD professionals with more effective tools for improving and retaining valuable team members toward achieving important business objectives and goals. Appropriately focused research and informed HRD interventions can hopefully lead to individual and collective gains.

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