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# **Social participation and social capital in South Yorkshire coalfield communities**

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This article draws on responses from a 2004 survey of 3771 residents in nine South Yorkshire coalfield communities to explore levels of social participation and the relationship between social participation and social capital. The survey provides a relatively unusual data source as, in addition to collecting information about levels of participation, it elicits the type(s) of groups residents are involved with. The article provides two key messages for policy-makers and practitioners. The first relates to the findings and indicates that particular components of social capital are associated with particular types of social participation. The second relates to the survey methodology and demonstrates the importance of establishing the type(s) of groups that residents are involved with when examining levels of social participation. This article – based on a paper presented at the Institute for Volunteering Research conference on ‘Frontiers and Horizons of Volunteering Research’ held in Birmingham on 28–29 November 2005 – uses data collected as part of a larger study which evaluated the impact of regeneration on the level of social capital in nine South Yorkshire communities. The study set out to assess the impact of two major public programmes on the nine communities: Health Action Zone (HAZ) and round five of the UK government’s Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Both these programmes operate within the context of the £1.7 billion Objective One Programme for the sub-region supported by the European Union. And both programmes were designed – inter alia – to boost levels of social capital in deprived communities.

The main study reported a number of key messages suggesting that investment in social capital can lead to better health and can also assist sustainable development in the communities (see Gilbertson et al, 2005).

Data collected as part of the evaluation also presented an opportunity to explore the relationship between volunteering and social capital in the nine communities. This

article reports on levels of social participation and how these relate to particular components of social capital, namely networks and trust. In particular, it concentrates on how levels of social capital vary by participation in particular types of group.

The article demonstrates the importance of examining these relationships by different types of group rather than just looking at whether people participate or not. It was not until involvement in particular types of group was analysed that some important relationships were revealed which contribute to a better understanding of the influences on social participation. For example, whilst trust in institutions (such as the police and the local council) is not a significant predictor of social participation, such trust is significantly related to participation in education and religious groups.

### **The policy context**

Community involvement has received considerable renewed emphasis in recent years. In particular, the Labour government has promoted community involvement as part of its civil renewal agenda (see Lowndes et al, 2001), and numerous initiatives across a range of policy areas have been introduced to promote active participation in communities (Williams, 2003).

The 2002 Spending Review and the 2002 Treasury-led Cross cutting review of the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in service delivery (HM Treasury, 2002a) resulted in the government committing itself to 'a step change in its relationship with the VCS' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004:4). One consequence of this 'step change' was the Home Office Public Service Agreement target (PSA8) for active communities in England, which aims to:

support strong and active communities in which people of all races and backgrounds are valued and participate on equal terms; increase voluntary and community sector activity, including increasing community participation, by 5% by 2006; bring about measurable improvements in race equality and community cohesion across a range of performance indicators, as part of the government's objectives on equality and social inclusion (HM Treasury, 2002b).

According to the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (HOCS), levels of active community participation have increased: around 18.8 million people were engaged in 2001 compared to 20.3 million people in 2003 – a rise of more than one and a half million (Munton and Zurawan, 2004).

### **Social capital**

Social capital is a contested concept and many different disciplines have attempted to define it. Despite the confusion, there is some consensus within the social sciences on a definition that emphasises the role of networks and civic norms. The main components of definitions of social capital tend to be:

- Social networks: who knows who (both informal and formal)
- Social norms: informal and formal rules that guide the behaviour of network members
- Sanctions: processes that ensure members of a network keep to the rules

Putman's succinct definition informed the design of the study and provides a description of social capital that focuses on social networks, norms and trust:

Social Capital . . . refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993:167).

Some commentators see trust as an outcome of social capital (Woolcock, 2001), others regard it as a component of the shared values that make up social capital, and yet others consider it to be both (Cote and Healy, 2001). There are often two types of trust: trust in people we know and trust, and the trust we have in people we don't know. Putnam (1993) distinguishes personal trust from social or system trust and argues that the first (personal trust) leads to the second (system trust), which in turn leads to better economic performance. Fukuyama (1995) is best known for the integration of social capital and trust, working within an economic framework; he argued that the level of trust in a given society affects its prosperity, democracy and economic performance.

A full debate about the definition of social capital and the strengths and weaknesses of the concept is outside the remit of this article, but it is worth looking at the relationship between social capital and volunteering. It is fair to say that the nature of this relationship has not been fully resolved. Some commentators use volunteering as a proxy for social capital (Dekker, 2002), whilst others consider it a core component of the definition of social capital (Hall, 1999). According to Putman (2000), however, reciprocity is an important element of social capital; this is not necessarily a feature of volunteering, yet others argue that volunteering does involve mutual gain (Onyx et al, 2003).

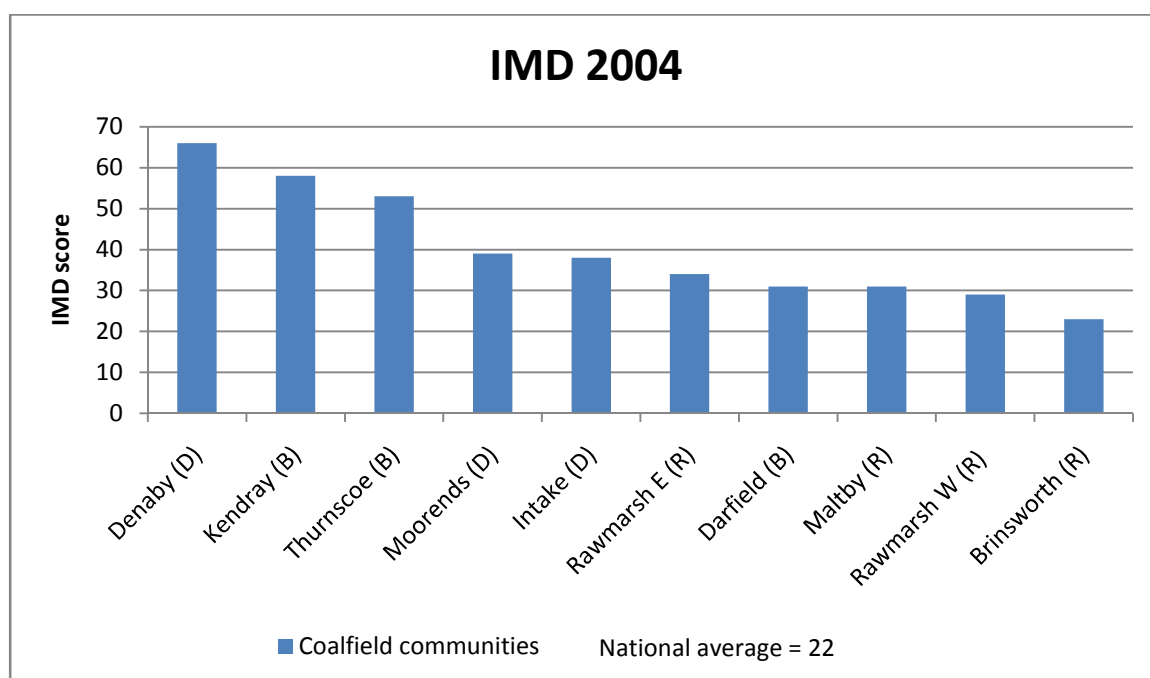
A number of studies have found important, but caveated, relationships between volunteering and the formation of social capital. For example, Onyx and Leonard (2000) claim that most forms of volunteering generate social capital of some kind, although not all social capital is based on volunteering. Sixsmith and Boneham (2003), in their case study analysis of the relationship between social capital, gender and health, suggested that the role of participation in voluntary organisations was crucial in the development of social capital for some members of the community and yet exclusionary for others.

## **The study areas**

This study covers nine communities within the former coalfield area of South Yorkshire (see Gilbertson et al, 2005, for a full overview of the areas together with nine individual community profiles).

The nine communities, three from each of three South Yorkshire boroughs (Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham), were chosen broadly to reflect the diversity of the coalfield. The communities are generally typified by high levels of unemployment, low average life expectancy, high levels of teenage pregnancy, high levels of premature deaths attributable to circulatory disease and low levels of educational attainment. In 2004 the communities had higher levels of deprivation than a national average as measured by the Index Multiple Deprivations (IMD) 2004 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Index of Multiple Deprivation score 2004



Source: *Gilbertson et al, 2005*

All nine communities have regeneration teams and are undergoing a range of Area Based Initiatives (ABIs). Initiatives and projects common to the nine communities include: SRB, HAZ, Sure Start Plus, Sports Action Zones and Youth Inclusion Programme.

### What is community participation?

Attwood *et al* (2003) define four types of community participation:

1. Social participation: being involved in groups, clubs or organisations.
2. Informal volunteering: giving unpaid help as an individual to others who are not members of the family.
3. Formal volunteering: giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment. It has roots in social participation but involves greater commitment.
4. Civic participation: engaging in at least one of a range of nine activities including signing a petition and attending a public meeting or rally.

The 2004 South Yorkshire Coalfield Survey (SYCS) collected data regarding the first two categories of community participation. Levels of social participation are established using two questions taken from the ONS harmonised question set (Figure 2). Levels of informal volunteering are established using three indicators of reciprocal help and support (Figure 7). Although this article focuses primarily on social participation, it later explores the relationship between social participation and informal volunteering.

Figure 2: Social participation survey questions

### South Yorkshire Social Capital Survey, 2004

*Have you been involved in any local organisation(s) or activities over the last 3 years? (such as sports, PTA, youth clubs)*

*Which of these categories on this card best describes any groups you have taken part in over the last 3 years?*

- *Hobbies/social clubs*
- *Sports/exercise groups, including taking part, coaching or going to watch*
- *Local community or neighbourhood groups*
- *Groups for children or young people*
- *Adult education groups*
- *Groups for older people*
- *Environmental groups*
- *Health, disability and welfare groups*
- *Political groups*
- *Trade union groups*
- *Religious groups, including going to a place of worship or belonging to a religious based group*
- *Other group (please specify)*

### General Household Survey, 2004/05\*

The next questions are about involvement in groups, clubs and organisations. These could be formally organised groups or just groups of people who get together to do an activity or talk about things. Please exclude just paying a subscription, giving money and anything that was a requirement of your job.

In the last 12 months have you been involved with any groups of people who get together to do an activity or talk about things? These could include evening classes, support groups, slimming clubs, keep-fit classes, pub teams and so on.

Which categories on this card best describe the groups you have taken part in? (categories of responses provided are identical to those above).

Source: Gilbertson et al, 2005; \*UK data archive, 2006b

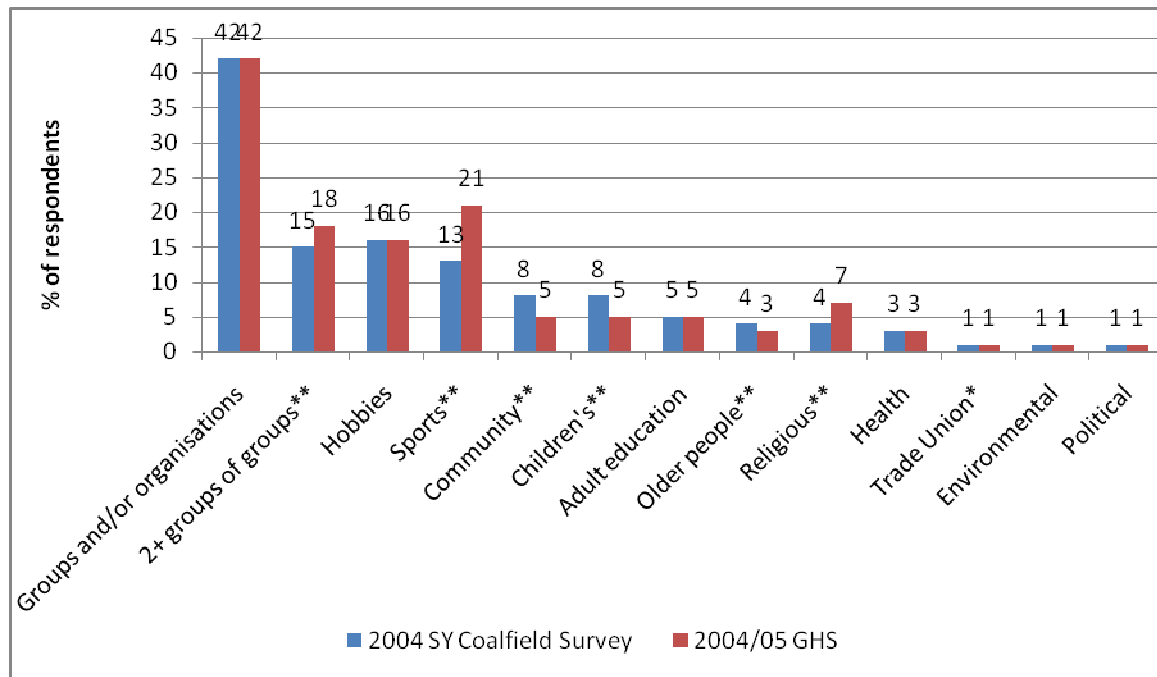
## Levels of social participation

Figure 3 illustrates the levels of social participation in the South Yorkshire coalfield communities in 2004 and compares these with the recently released 2004/05 General Household Survey (GHS) results. It should be noted that whilst the 2004/05 GHS provides the best benchmark data available for the 2004 SYCS, there are marked differences in the wording of the questions and the time frames (Figure 2).

Forty-two per cent of respondents in the study areas indicated that they had participated in groups or local organisations, a figure comparable with the 2004/05 GHS, which also found that 42 per cent of respondents had participated. However, the GHS found that 18 per cent of residents participate in two or more types of

group, a figure significantly higher than for the South Yorkshire coalfields (15 per cent).

Figure 3: Social participation



Note: \*Differences are significant at the 95 per cent level. \*\*Differences are significant at the 99 per cent level

Sources: 2004 SYCS. National average: 2004/05 GHS, UK data archive 2006a

In addition to establishing general levels of participation, both the 2004 SYCS and the 2004/05 GHS gather information about involvement in eleven types of group or organisation (Figures 2 and 3). Perhaps unsurprisingly, hobbies and sports are the most popular types of group. Across the nine study communities 16 per cent of residents have taken part in hobbies and 13 per cent in sports groups.

Compared with national averages, similarities are evident for participation in hobbies, adult education, health, environmental and political groups. Differences in participation levels for these groups are not significant. However, participation in sports and religious groups is significantly higher nationally compared with the study communities, whilst participation in community, children's, older people and trade union groups is significantly lower nationally compared with the study communities.

### Who is participating?

Logistic regression modelling is used to find which cohorts of people are most likely to be socially participating in the nine communities. This allows us to understand if, for example, women are more likely to participate compared with men, independent of their age, educational attainment, employment status and tenure, and whether or not there are children in the household. Logistic regression analysis of the 2004

SYCS revealed that sex, education and tenure are significant predictors of social participation (Figure 4).

Women in our study are significantly more likely to socially participate than men. Women are 25 per cent more likely to participate in groups/organisations and 41 per cent more likely to participate in two or more types of group. Although analysis of the 2001 HOCS found that men are slightly more likely to be involved in social participation (Attwood et al, 2003), Coulthard et al (2002) found that women are more likely to be involved in local organisations, and Evans and Saxton (2005) found a consistent trend in that women are more likely than men to have volunteered in the last three months.

Tenure also has a significant relationship with likelihood of participation in our study. Owner-occupiers are found to be the most likely to participate overall and social renters the least likely. These findings are consistent with those emerging from the National Evaluation of New Deal for Communities (NDC), which found that those in private rented accommodation were 34 per cent less likely to engage with local organisations on a voluntary basis than owner-occupiers (Grimsley et al, 2005).

The most marked influence on likelihood of participation across the nine study communities is level of education. Likelihood of participation increases significantly with educational attainment. Residents with at least NVQ level four are almost six times more likely to be involved with two or more types of group compared with those with no formal qualifications. Educational attainment has consistently been shown to influence the likelihood of social participation and volunteering. In the 2001 HOCS (Attwood et al, 2003), people with the highest levels of education were more likely to be involved in all types of voluntary and community activities (see also Coulthard et al, 2002, and Warde et al, 2003).

Finally, the 2004 SYCS found that levels of general social participation were not related to resident's age, work status or having children in the household. These findings are contrary to many other studies. For example, Attwood et al (2003) report that the oldest age group (those over 75) are less likely to be involved in social participation and, similarly, Evans and Saxton (2005) found that, following a dip around the age 55–64, levels of volunteering continue to rise during retirement years before falling to their lowest levels for those aged over 75. Attwood et al (2003) also found that people in employment were more likely to be involved in all types of voluntary and community activities, and Grimsley et al (2005) found that NDC residents living in households with children are significantly more likely to participate.

### **Who is participating in what?**

Whilst many studies examine the demographic and socio-economic factors that influence social participation per se, few explore the type of group or activity that people are engaged with. A notable exception is the analysis of the 2001 HOCS undertaken by Attwood et al (2003), which explores type of activity by sex, age and ethnicity. By contrast, this analysis explores type of activity by sex, age, tenure and household work status, and whether or not there are children living in the household. Later sections explore the relationship between type of activity and social capital indicators.



Figure 4: Odds ratios for who participates

|                  | Groups and/or organisations | 2+ types of group | Hobbies/social | Sports      | Community   | Children    | Adult education | Older people | Health      | Religious   | Political/trade union |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Sex</b>       |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Male             | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| Female           | <b>1.25</b>                 | <b>1.41</b>       | <b>0.74</b>    | 0.94        | <b>1.38</b> | <b>2.38</b> | <b>3.01</b>     | <b>2.21</b>  | <b>1.94</b> | <b>2.03</b> | <b>0.32</b>           |
| <b>Age</b>       |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| 16-24            | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| 25-34            | 1.04                        | 1.26              | <b>1.57</b>    | 0.96        | 1.96        | 0.80        | 1.73            | 2.70         | 0.87        | 1.75        | 0.00                  |
| 35-54            | 0.91                        | 1.22              | 1.30           | <b>0.64</b> | <b>2.12</b> | 0.70        | 2.21            | 5.14         | 0.85        | 2.11        | 0.64                  |
| 55-64            | 1.06                        | 1.32              | <b>1.69</b>    | <b>0.69</b> | <b>3.44</b> | 0.62        | 1.92            | 5.74         | 0.66        | <b>3.60</b> | <b>1.12</b>           |
| 65+              | 1.04                        | 1.54              | 1.52           | <b>0.40</b> | <b>3.15</b> | 0.34        | 1.41            | <b>26.3</b>  | 0.50        | <b>6.84</b> | 1.04                  |
|                  |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| <b>Education</b> |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| None/other       | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| NVQ 1            | 1.26                        | <b>2.13</b>       | 1.13           | <b>1.70</b> | 0.96        | <b>2.26</b> | 2.06            | 1.26         | 0.79        | 1.74        | <b>2.94</b>           |
| NVQ 2            | <b>1.87</b>                 | <b>2.21</b>       | 1.22           | <b>1.95</b> | <b>1.90</b> | <b>2.18</b> | <b>4.13</b>     | 1.29         | <b>2.45</b> | <b>2.04</b> | 1.21                  |
| NVQ 3            | <b>2.32</b>                 | <b>2.90</b>       | <b>1.53</b>    | <b>2.10</b> | <b>3.62</b> | <b>3.14</b> | <b>6.83</b>     | <b>2.58</b>  | <b>2.50</b> | 1.66        | <b>2.80</b>           |
| NVQ 4            | <b>4.55</b>                 | <b>5.81</b>       | <b>1.79</b>    | <b>3.69</b> | <b>2.84</b> | <b>4.65</b> | <b>10.67</b>    | <b>1.93</b>  | <b>7.71</b> | <b>4.67</b> | <b>5.29</b>           |
|                  |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| <b>Workless</b>  |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Yes              | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| No               | 1.06                        | 1.23              | <b>1.38</b>    | <b>1.31</b> | 0.86        | 0.97        | 0.72            | 1.28         | 0.66        | 0.72        | 1.27                  |
| <b>Children</b>  |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| No               | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| Yes              | 1.18                        | 1.20              | 0.91           | 1.03        | 1.17        | <b>4.65</b> | 1.22            | 0.73         | 0.68        | 0.94        | 1.23                  |
| <b>Tenure</b>    |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Owner-occupied   | 1.0                         | 1.0               | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
| Social rented    | <b>0.76</b>                 | <b>0.71</b>       | 0.97           | 0.48        | 0.96        | 0.75        | <b>0.58</b>     | 0.86         | 1.13        | <b>0.45</b> | <b>0.43</b>           |
| Private rented   | <b>0.91</b>                 | 0.95              | 1.16           | 0.66        | 0.82        | 1.52        | 0.55            | 0.24         | 0.61        | <b>2.32</b> | 0.42                  |

Note: Figures in bold are significant at the 95% level

Attwood et al (2003) found that women are more likely to engage in the fields of children's education and schools, religion, health and disability, and social welfare, but much less likely than men to engage in leisure activities like sports, hobbies and social clubs. In our study, women are more likely to participate in many similar types

of group, and in particular are over three times more likely than men to participate in adult education groups. As with the HOCS survey, women are less likely to participate in hobbies and trade-union/political groups, but we found no significant difference in the likelihood of participating in sports groups.

Although age was not found to be a significant predictor of overall participation, it is a predictor of participation for certain types of group. Older people are more likely to be involved with older people, religious and community groups, but less likely to be involved with sports groups. This mirrors the findings of the 2001 HOCS. Tenure is a significant predictor for participation in adult education and trade union groups (for which owner-occupiers are most likely to participate) and religious groups (for which private renters are most likely to participate). However, tenure is not a predictor of participation in hobbies, sports, community, children's, older people and health groups.

As with overall levels of participation, those with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate in all types of group. This is particularly true for adult education, health-related and trade-union groups. For example, residents with an educational attainment of at least NVQ level four are over ten times more likely to participate in adult education groups than residents with no formal qualifications.

Work status is also related to two of the individual types of group. Residents who are in work are significantly more likely to participate in hobbies and sports groups than those who are not in work. Finally, having children within the household was found to be a predictor only for participation in groups for children. Residents with a child in the household are over four and a half times more likely to participate than those without.

## **Trust and social participation**

As outlined earlier in the article, trust is an important concept in the social capital debate. Although few studies explore the relationship between type of participation and type of trust, a number do illustrate a clear general relationship: for example, Hickman and Manning's 2005 study of NDC areas found that 'trust is strongly related to participation' (Hickman and Manning, 2005:54).

The 2004 SYCS questionnaire collected information about residents' levels of personal trust and system trust, enabling two trust indexes to be constructed (Figure 5). Firstly a 'vertical trust' score was calculated by summing residents' responses to levels of trust in police, courts, government, local council, local councillors and local employers. Vertical trust or system trust is used here as a measurement of 'linking social capital', which 'refers to the relationship between individual groups in different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status and wealth are accessed by different groups' (Woolcock, 2001).

Secondly, a 'horizontal trust' score was calculated by summing residents' responses to levels of trust in neighbours, friends and family. Horizontal trust or personal trust is used here as a measure of 'bonding social capital', which takes place within and

cements homogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000) and is provided by close family and friends.

Figure 5: 2004 SYCS trust questions

*How much do you trust these groups of people?*

- *Police*
- *Courts*
- *Government*
- *Local council*
- *Local councillors*
- *Local employers*
- *Neighbours*
- *Friends*
- *Family*

Source: *Gilbertson et al, 2005*

Logistic regression modelling found that horizontal trust has a stronger relationship with social participation than vertical trust (Figure 6). Whilst residents' levels of vertical trust are not related to social participation per se, those with high levels of horizontal trust are significantly more likely to participate than those with low levels.

Using the types of group residents participate in to explore the relationship between participation and trust provides insightful information. Figure 6 illustrates that horizontal trust is significantly and positively associated with participation in hobbies, sports, community groups and groups for children. However, horizontal trust is not a predictor for participation in adult education, groups for older people, health groups, religious activities and trade-union groups.

Figure 6: Adjusted odds ratios for trust and participation

|                         | Groups and/or organisations | 2+ types of group | Hobbies/social | Sports      | Community   | Children    | Adult education | Older people | Health | Religious   | Political/trade union |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Vertical trust</b>   |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
|                         | 1.0                         | 1.0               |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| Low                     | 0                           | 0                 | 1.0            | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0         | 1.0             | 1.0          | 1.0    | 1.0         | 1.0                   |
|                         | 0.9                         | 1.0               |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| Medium                  | 9                           | 7                 | 0.96           | 1.06        | 0.76        | 1.20        | <b>1.57</b>     | 0.93         | 0.84   | <b>1.70</b> | 1.07                  |
|                         | 0.9                         | 1.1               |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| <b>Horizontal trust</b> |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
|                         | 1.0                         | 1.0               |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| Low                     | 0                           | 0                 | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00   | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
|                         | 1.5                         | 1.1               |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| Medium                  | 2                           | 9                 | <b>2.49</b>    | 1.28        | 1.51        | 1.74        | 1.46            | 0.84         | 0.55   | 0.82        | 1.92                  |
|                         | <b>2.5</b>                  | <b>2.4</b>        |                |             |             |             |                 |              |        |             |                       |
| High                    | <b>8</b>                    | <b>0</b>          | <b>3.59</b>    | <b>2.27</b> | <b>3.66</b> | <b>3.94</b> | 1.91            | 1.99         | 1.01   | 1.17        | 1.17                  |

Note: Figures in bold are significant at the 95% level

Although vertical trust was not found to be a significant predictor of overall social participation, it is related to participation in adult education groups and religious groups. These findings may suggest that people with high levels of horizontal trust (or bonding social capital) are more likely to be involved with groups that are potentially made up of, and organised by, people similar to themselves: for example, sports, hobbies and social groups. By contrast, high levels of vertical trust may indicate a greater likelihood of involvement with institutional-type activities such as adult education and religious groups.

### Social networks, reciprocal help and social participation

Previous studies have found that whilst volunteering may be associated with, and play an important role in the development of, social networks and social capital, the relationship may not be always positive. Onyx et al's 2003 article argues that volunteers may be instrumental in either creating or obstructing broader community networks. That is, they play a potential bridge-builder or gatekeeper role in network building, a role which may facilitate or impede inclusiveness.

The 2004 SYCS contains three indicators of reciprocal help and support (or informal volunteering) and two indicators of social networks (Figure 7). In Putnam's (2000) later work, he distinguished between two important types of social capital: bridging and bonding. Bonding social capital, as defined earlier, relates to the cementing of homogenous groups and is good for 'getting by', and bridging social capital refers

the bonds of connectedness that are formed across diverse social groups and are seen as crucial for 'getting ahead'. In Figure 7, the first four questions are designed to elicit information about bonding social capital, whilst the final question – whether people from different backgrounds get on – is designed to elicit information about bridging social capital.

Two of the reciprocity questions – 'help each other' and 'could ask someone for a lift' – were found to have little relationship with likelihood of participation. However, 'favour for a neighbour' was found to be strongly related to likelihood of participation (Figure 8). Those who have done a favour for a neighbour in the last six months are significantly more likely to participate generally and participate in most types of group. The only exceptions to this are participation in hobbies and trade-union groups.

Figure 7: 2004 SYCS social networks and reciprocal help questions

**Reciprocal help**  
*In general what kind of neighbourhood would you say you live in? Would you say it is a neighbourhood in which people do things together and try and help each other or one in which people mostly go their own ways?  
In the past 6 months have you done a favour for a neighbour?  
If you needed a lift to be somewhere urgently, could you ask anyone for help?*

**Social Networks**  
*Thinking about your immediate area would you say that you know most/many/a few/not many of the people in your neighbourhood?  
To what extent do you agree or disagree that this neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?*

Source: Gilbertson et al, 2005

Figure 8: Adjusted odds ratios for social networks, reciprocity and participation

|   | Groups and/or organisations | 2+ types of group | Hobbies/social | Sports      | Community   | Children    | Adult education | Older people | Health      | Religious   | Political/trade union |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Help each other</b>                          |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Go own way                                      | 1.00                        | 1.00              | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
| Mixture/ other                                  | 0.96                        | 0.97              | 1.13           | 1.14        | 1.15        | 1.16        | 0.71            | 1.01         | 0.82        | 0.90        | 0.62                  |
| Help each other                                 | <b>0.83</b>                 | 0.80              | 0.90           | 0.80        | 1.28        | 1.05        | 0.75            | 0.76         | 1.05        | 0.71        | 0.66                  |
| <b>Favour for a neighbour</b>                   |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| No  | 1.00                        | 1.00              | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
| Just moved                                      | 1.12                        | 0.30              | 0.63           | 0.57        | 0.76        | 1.19        | 4.71            | 0.04         | 0.01        | 1.47        | 6.47                  |
| Yes   | <b>1.54</b>                 | <b>1.81</b>       | <b>1.16</b>    | <b>1.30</b> | <b>1.88</b> | <b>1.52</b> | <b>4.63</b>     | <b>1.89</b>  | <b>2.07</b> | <b>1.68</b> | 2.10                  |
| <b>Need lift could ask someone</b>              |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| No  | 1.00                        | 1.00              | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
| Just moved                                      | <b>0.53</b>                 | 0.40              | 0.88           | 0.32        | 0.54        | 0.37        | 0.63            | 0.45         | 0.30        | 0.62        | 1.37                  |
| Yes   | 0.88                        | 0.86              | 1.28           | 0.92        | 0.97        | 0.62        | 0.79            | 2.22         | <b>0.35</b> | 0.65        | 0.33                  |
| <b>Know people in the area</b>                  |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Not many  | 1.00                        | 1.00              | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
| Few   | 1.06                        | 1.15              | 1.66           | 0.82        | 1.48        | 1.72        | 0.77            | 2.07         | <b>0.33</b> | 1.07        | 0.78                  |
| Many  | 0.89                        | 0.83              | 1.52           | 0.72        | 1.08        | 1.50        | 0.53            | 2.56         | <b>0.31</b> | 0.66        | 0.61                  |
| Most  | 1.34                        | <b>1.76</b>       | <b>2.01</b>    | 1.11        | <b>2.41</b> | <b>2.67</b> | 0.67            | 3.59         | 0.51        | 0.96        | 1.14                  |
| <b>People from different backgrounds get on</b> |                             |                   |                |             |             |             |                 |              |             |             |                       |
| Definitely disagree                             | 1.00                        | 1.00              | 1.00           | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00            | 1.00         | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00                  |
| Tend to agree                                   | <b>0.81</b>                 | 0.90              | 1.22           | 0.88        | 0.53        | 1.45        | 0.41            | 0.89         | 0.56        | 0.57        | 0.63                  |
| Don't know/too few/all the same                 | 1.04                        | 0.91              | 1.07           | 0.95        | 0.81        | 1.16        | 0.64            | 1.22         | 0.63        | 1.21        | 0.32                  |

|                  |             |             |             |             |             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Tend to agree    | 1.20        | 1.12        | 1.41        | 1.34        | 0.67        | 1.19 | 0.70 | 0.98 | 1.02 | 1.46 | 0.72 |
| Definitely agree | <b>1.89</b> | <b>1.81</b> | <b>1.66</b> | <b>1.98</b> | <b>1.04</b> | 2.16 | 1.18 | 2.04 | 2.05 | 1.86 | 0.84 |

Note: *Figure in bold are significant at the 95% level*

*Because of the small number of participants there is not a significant statistical relationship between participation in political or trade union groups and having done a favour for a neighbour*

Social networks appear to have a stronger relationship with participation. The more people in an area that residents know, the more likely they are to participate in two or more types of group, hobbies, community groups and groups for children. For example, residents who indicate they know many people in the neighbourhood are over two and a half times more likely to participate in groups for children than people who do not know many people.

A resident's opinion on whether people from different backgrounds in the area get on is also a strong predictor of participation. Residents who definitely agree that people from different backgrounds in the area get on are significantly more likely to be involved with organisations and participate with two or more types of group, hobbies, sports and groups for children than those who definitely disagree with the statement.

## **Conclusions and policy implications**

This study provides an insight into the levels of community participation in nine ex-coalfield communities in South Yorkshire, and examines how levels of participation and participation in different types of group relate to components of social capital (trust, social networks and neighbourhood reciprocity). The main findings emerging from the research indicate that:

- Women, those with higher levels of education, owner-occupiers and private renters are most likely to participate per se.
- Women are more likely to participate in all types of group apart from hobbies, sports or political/trade-union groups.
- Older people are more likely to be involved with groups for older people, religious groups and community groups, but less likely to be involved with sports groups.
- Those with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in all types of group. This is particularly true for adult education, health-related groups and political/ trade-union groups.
- Horizontal trust (bonding social capital) seems to have more influence on overall participation than vertical trust (linking social capital).
- Those with high horizontal trust are more likely to be involved with hobbies, sports, community and children's groups.
- Those with high vertical trust are more likely to be involved with adult education and religious groups.
- Different types of social capital ('bonding' or 'bridging') appear to have an influence on the type of groups that people participate in.

- Two indicators – knowing people in the area and agreeing with the statement that people from different backgrounds in the area get on – are positively related to participation.

In addition, the article raises two key issues for policy-makers and practitioners. The first relates to the findings of the study. In line with earlier work (see Hickman and Manning, 2005), we found that both the socio-demographic characteristics of residents and levels of trust, a central feature of social capital, are related to participation. Additionally, our analysis shows that different components of social capital appear to influence different types of participation. If involvement in specific groups is to be encouraged, then it may be necessary to pay attention to, and invest in, policies and initiatives that help to enhance the elements of social capital associated with that particular type of participation. For example, regeneration teams wishing to encourage residents' engagement with community groups could focus on fostering horizontal trust and neighbourliness. There are questions over whether current policy towards community involvement and social participation can effectively address these issues. Using data from 2000 GHS, Williams (2003) concludes that UK government policy towards developing community involvement through encouraging formal community-based groups neglects the cultivation of one-to-one acts of good neighbourliness (informal community involvement). This approach effectively privileges more affluent wards and imposes on the more deprived wards, which possess different cultures of community engagement. The legacy of coalmining and the established close-knit ties in the study communities may well have a bearing on levels of social participation.

The second issue concerns methodology. Many surveys continue to capture only overall levels of participation. The article clearly demonstrates the importance of establishing the type(s) of groups residents are involved in, as this additional level of detail facilitates better understanding of participation drivers. However, this suggestion has obvious time and financial implications for anyone wanting to study community involvement. In the 2004 SYCS the more in-depth participation question took approximately three minutes to complete with each resident (a total of almost 189 hours for the entire survey).

Future research could consider designing a new participation question that provides better 'value for money': that is, which facilitates a similar level of understanding of the types of group residents are involved with, yet is sufficiently short to make it a viable option for more surveys. For example, utilisation of factor analysis techniques could reveal a method of combining categories of groups, thus enabling the same level of information to be captured using a more streamlined set of questions.

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