

Doing a Good Turn Daily: Boy and Girl Scouts as a Proxy for Cross-National Social Capital

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Abstract

This study introduces a new measure of social capital at the country-level of analysis. The political economy literature has thus far relied predominantly on survey data to operationalize social capital (e.g. Zak and Knack, 2001). While aggregation of responses to questions on generalized trust, for example, is arguably a sufficiently valid approximation of country-level social capital, existing survey data used in the literature are both geographically and temporally limited. This study conducts a reliability and validity analysis of an objectively derived proxy of social capital, based on membership statistics of Boy and Girl Scout Movements. This indicator promises to significantly expand the number of countries that can be studied in large-n statistical analyses.

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