

# Relational Theory

## 3: The importance of Bonding & Bridging, Leadership, Culture & Power

Social capital theory informs relational thinking on how to develop a different approach to engagement.

Putnam (2000) suggests that the formation of relationships can result in two different types of social capital: 'bonding' or 'bridging'.

Putnam explains that 'bonding' capital is exclusive and 'bridging' capital is inclusive.



When describing **bonding and bridging social capital**, Putnam (2000) links these concepts with de Souza Briggs' (1998) distinction between **social capital that results in social support and helps one to 'get by' (bonding)** and **social capital that results in social leverage, helping one to 'get ahead' (bridging)**. So, setting out to develop relationships based on bonding social capital can help to build relationships required for collaboration, whereas developing relationships based on bridging social capital can help to address issues of gaps in culture and power.

**The need for both bonding and bridging social capital underpins Warren et al's (2009) 3 core elements of relational engagement.**

## Elements of Relational Engagement (adapted from Warren et al, 2009, p. 2210)

An emphasis on relationship building among a particular group of stakeholders (e.g. community members) and between community members and policymakers/politicians (officers/members).

A focus on the leadership development of stakeholders.

An effort to bridge the gap in culture and power between stakeholders and policymakers and politicians.

## Audit 3:

# Warren et al's (2009) 3 core elements of relational engagement

### Activity 3:

- In your work team, decide on 3-4 community engagement activities to consider.
- Work separately to complete a proforma for each engagement activity before considering the questions.
- Come back together as a team to compare and discuss any emerging patterns or themes.

### Note down any patterns and consider:

- Do certain project **locations** or the engagement of **certain stakeholders** appear to **influence the development of bonding/bridging relationships, leadership opportunities for community members or opportunities to bridge gaps in culture and power?**
- Why might this be so?
- Does the **funding or duration of the project** have any impact?
- In what ways?
- What were the **outcomes** of the project – from a **community perspective? From a professional perspective?**
- **How might different approaches** to the development of **bonding/bridging relationships, leadership opportunities for community members or opportunities to bridge gaps in culture and power** impact on future project outcomes?

**Audit 3:**  
**Social Capital & 3 Core Elements of Relational Engagement**

Activity	Location	Funding/Duration	Key Stakeholders	Outcomes
Evidence of an explicit aim to build relationships <i>among</i> community members?			Areas for development:	
Evidence of an explicit aim to build relationships <i>between</i> policymakers, local politicians, other professionals and community members?			Areas for development:	
Evidence of leadership development activities:			Areas for development:	
Evidence of efforts to bridge gaps in culture and power:			Areas for development:	