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Theories Of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly

Ben Fine

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Ben Fine is the world's most thorough and indefatigable critic of the abuse of the concept of capital that follows from adding 'social' - and other adjectives - to it. Further intellectual confusion is generated by the different meanings social capital can have as it colonises the social sciences.

Here he builds on his magnum opus - 'Social Capital and Social Theory' - to explore the reasons behind the chaos this causes and the consequences of the penetration of notions of profit into every nook and cranny of our lives.

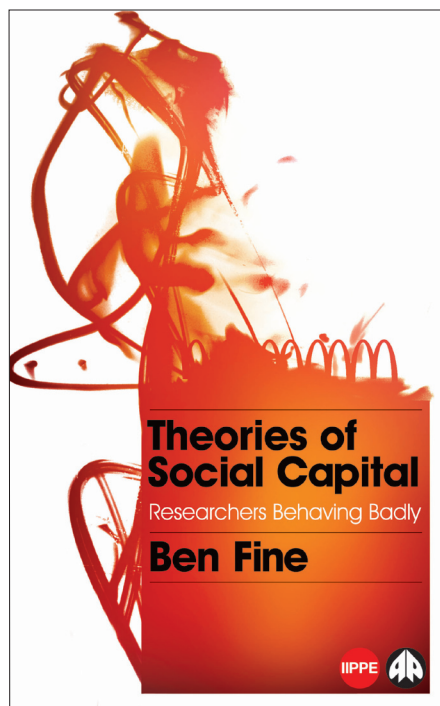
Barbara Harriss-White, Oxford University

Tracing the evolution of social capital since his highly acclaimed contribution of 2001 (*Social Capital Versus Social Theory*), Ben Fine consolidates his position as the world's leading critic of the concept.

Fine forcibly demonstrates how social capital has expanded across the social sciences only by degrading the different disciplines and topics that it touches: a McDonaldisation of social theory. The rise and fall of social capital at the World Bank is critically explained as is social capital's growing presence in disciplines, such as management studies, and its relative absence in others, such as social history.

Writing with a sharp critical edge, Fine not only deconstructs the roller-coaster presence of social capital across the social sciences but also draws out lessons on how (and how not) to do research.

Ben Fine is Professor of Economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He recently co-authored with Dimitris Milonakis *From Economics Imperialism to Freakonomics: The Shifting Boundaries Between Economics and Other Social Sciences* (2009), winner of the 2009 Deutscher Prize, and *From Political Economy to Economics: Method, the Social and the Historical in the Evolution of Economic Theory*, winner of the 2009 Gunnar Myrdal Prize. He serves on the Social Science Research Committee of the UK's Food Standards Agency



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