How Does Social Capital Affect Women? Guilds and Communities in Early Modern Germany

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In 1626, an independent unmarried “lass” in the tiny Black Forest town of Wildberg left service, took independent lodgings, and began to earn her bread by “spinning perpetually at the wheel,” attracting complaints at the community assembly. In 1663, the widowed Anna Barbara Haugin in the nearby village of Güttlingen supported her young family by cultivating crops and selling calves, despite attempts by the community to “deny her the village privileges.” In 1697, Georg Ernst’s widow in Güttlingen lived from her baking, despite being fined by the guild when she “sold a 4-pound loaf for 2½ Kreuzer even though the legal price was 3 Kreuzer.” In 1734, Michel Kuch’s wife in the proto-industrial village of Ebhausen sought to maximize her profits from yarn selling by attending nocturnal spinning bees “to cover her lighting costs,” in the teeth of penalties from the community church court. In 1742, the maidservant Christina Gauß was dismissed from her job at the Ebhausen mill when her mistress suspected her of fornicating with her master, got temporary work as a harvest cutter but then failed to find another job, could not go home to her father in Rohrdorf “because he himself has nothing,” was ordered out of Ebhausen several times, but repeated dully to the community court that “she knew of nowhere to go.” In 1745, a Wildberg maidservant was fined by the local weavers’ guild because she engaged in wool combing, “as though she were a journeyman, contrary to the guild ordinance.” In 1764, a village woman known as “die Schmalzin” (“the lard-woman”) was “buying up grain here and there, and

I thank André Carus, Partha Dasgupta, Tracy Dennison, Roberta Dessi, Jeremy Edwards, Tim Guinnane, Klas Nyberg, Robert Putnam, Richard Smith, Paul Warde, Tony Wrigley, participants in the Early Modern European History Seminar at Pembroke College Cambridge, seven anonymous referees, and the editor of the AHR, for stimulating comments on the arguments presented in this article. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of a British Academy Research Readership (2001–03).

1 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (hereafter, HSAS), A573 Bü. 86, fol. 58r, October 30, 1626: “spinne Immertz am radt.”
3 HSAS, A573 Bü. 981 (1697–98), unpag.: “den vier pfündigen laib brodt umb 2½ da er doch 3 x gegolten, verkauft.”
5 PAE KKP, Vol. 4, fol. 4v–5r, October 8, 1742: “weil er selber nichts hab” (fol. 5r); “Sie hab nirgend hin gewußt” (fol. 4v).
6 HSAS, A573 Bü. 896 (1744–45), unpag., rubric “Strafen”: “um willen Er seine Magd der Ordnung zuwider gesellenweiß kamen laßen.”

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selling it again at a higher price on offer to the citizens, through which *commerium* she harms the bakers here,” provoking a member of the Wildberg bakers’ guild to report her to the community assembly, which forbade her to trade. In 1796, the forty-five-year-old spinster Friderika Mohlin moved into lodgings as an independent seamstress but was compelled to “betake herself back into her father’s house,” by community order.

Such women—daughters, maidservants, wives, widows, and independent spinsters—appear again and again in local documents working independently even when they had the opportunity to be, or actually were, members of male-headed households. Such women worked not just at housework but, as these cases illustrate, at commercial spinning, farming, traditional crafts, agricultural labor, proto-industrial wool combing, petty commerce, and seamstress. They operated not just in the family economy but within a much more complex framework of social institutions—the market, the community, the guild, the church, the state—whose relative impact on women’s well-being continues to evoke lively debate. Initially, many historians were strongly attracted by a “pessimist” school of thought, which regarded women’s economic position as being systematically damaged by the growth of the market. Subsequent empirical findings, however, have given rise to a more differentiated approach, which emphasizes the role of the state, the church, the guild, the community, as social institutions that imposed at least equal constraints on preindustrial women. Still others contend that “patriarchy” is so strong and universal that women’s situation is historically invariant with respect to the prevailing institutional structure. The impact of different social and

7 HSAS, A573 Bü. 95, fol. 28v, December 17, 1764: “hin und wider früchten auf, verkaufe solche wider in einem höhern Pretio auf beutt an die hiesige burgere und verursache durch dises Commerium . . . denen hiesigen becken einem Schaden.”
8 HSAS, A573 Bü. 62, fol. 24r–v, January 18, 1796: “Sich wider in ihres vatters Hauße zu begeben.”
in institutional arrangements on women’s economic position is thus still an open question, and one aim of this article is to investigate whether the concept of “social capital” can help shed new light on it.15

This is the more urgent because the recent explosion of interest in “social capital” has caused social scientists to seek historical examples of its benefits, directing particularly eager attention to preindustrial European social institutions. “Social capital” is the name given to a store of value generated when a group of individuals invests resources in fostering a body of relationships with each other (a “social network”).16 These relationships, it is argued, create trust by fostering shared norms, improve contract enforcement by easing information flows, and enhance sanctions against deviant behavior by facilitating collective action. This is held to benefit the entire society.17 Policymakers in organizations such as the World Bank have begun advocating investment in social capital and social networks to solve problems of social exclusion and regional disparities in the rich West, economic transition in Eastern Europe, and development challenges in the Third World.18 From the beginning, social capital theorists have sought to mobilize history in support of their views, portraying past societies as having possessed more and better social capital than modern ones, and mining them for examples of the closely knit and multi-stranded social networks thought to generate especially rich stocks of social capital. In particular, social scientists have focused on two historical institutions as exemplars of social capital at work: the guild and the local community.19 Yet, while many social science studies mention historical examples of social capital and social networks in passing, few subject them to rigorous analysis, or investigate their net effect on the whole society in which they were embedded.

This article seeks to address the concerns of both historians and social scientists by bringing together gender and the theory of social capital. Social capital, it will


16 For recent surveys of this debate, see Thomas, “Women and Capitalism,” 542–43, 545–47; Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 7–15, 326–38.


argue, has important implications for thinking about gender—but gender also has important implications for thinking about social capital. Social capital can help us think about gender because it provides a conceptual framework for analyzing the precise characteristics of certain institutions that, it will be argued, facilitate gender discrimination. Patriarchal attitudes were universal in preindustrial Europe, but they were put into effect to a widely differing extent in different European societies. Analyzing gender discrimination in terms of social capital, I will argue, can help us understand why.20

Conversely, taking account of gender can help social scientists think more clearly about social capital. This is because gender compels us to examine the effects of any social network not just on members of that network but on network outsiders and the whole society. It forces us to ask whether the economically vulnerable and socially marginal can enjoy the benefits of social capital. As we shall see, they often cannot, and there are systematic reasons why this is the case.

Hard and detailed empirical evidence is essential for dealing with such general issues as gender and social capital. To obtain such evidence, this study selected a particular preindustrial society—early modern Germany—and compiled a detailed data set on gender-specific economic activities within a region of that society—the Württemberg Black Forest—over a period of two centuries (1600–1800). The data set included statistical sources such as tax lists, parish registers, censuses, and “soul-tables,” which yielded information on women’s household headship, wealth, demographic behavior, schooling, and sources of livelihood. But the vast mass of females—particularly those who did not head households or pay taxes—is invisible to such statistical documents. So the data set also included narrative sources such as court records, petitions, and account books, which describe the kinds of work women did and the legal and practical constraints on it. Narrative sources, however, cannot show what is typical or enable systematic comparisons by gender or other social categories. To transcend the limitations of both statistical and narrative sources, this study adopted the exceptionally labor-intensive and time-consuming research strategy of selecting a particularly detailed and systematic set of sources—the extraordinary church-court minutes kept by Württemberg communities from 1646 on—and extracting all references to observed work by women and men in two communities over a period of 150 years, generating out of a qualitative source a quantitative database containing 2,828 separate observations of working activity, broken down according to the worker’s gender and other characteristics. Taken together, these sources provide a rich and detailed empirical basis for analyzing the economic position of women in a preindustrial society and the relative impact on it of different social institutions.21

The southwest German territory of Württemberg is well suited for exploring

20 For detailed examples of how particular patriarchal attitudes (for example, disapproval of independent residence and work by unmarried women and of participation in guilded activities by females) were enforced under some institutional regimes in early modern Europe but less so (or not at all) in others, see, for instance, Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 11, 290–93, 319, 338–40.
21 For a detailed description of this data set, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, esp. 22–36, 320–22.
theories about how women’s economic position is affected by different social institutions. By 1600, it possessed a variegated economy, with farms productive enough to feed growing groups of land-poor and landless people, lively textile proto-industries in the Black Forest and Swabian Jura, and specialized retailers and merchants supplying both domestic and export markets. In all these sectors, women were active participants, not just working with male relatives within the family economy but—as we have seen—producing independently as farmers, craft mistresses, spinners, seamstresses, grain sellers, wool combers, and at an almost numberless array of other livelihoods. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Württemberg was slow in adopting many of the new forms of agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce that were transforming the more dynamic Atlantic economies. By 1800, its economy was stagnating relative to the Low Countries, England, France, Switzerland, and even some parts of Germany. Denied access to livelihoods at home, Württembergers were emigrating en masse to America and Eastern Europe. To some extent at least, this was due to a system of social institutions that, as this article will show, prevented important groups of the country’s inhabitants—among them women—from making a full contribution to its economy.

A first institutional feature that circumscribed both the development of the Württemberg economy and the opportunities of women within it was the state, which began in the later sixteenth century to expand taxation, warfare, bureaucracy, and its capacity to regulate local economic and social life. Württemberg was a “German territory of the second rank”—the sort in which the vast majority of early modern Germans lived—and this gave its state three key features. First, German territories experienced the growth of the early modern state in a particularly extreme form, partly because of the competition between territorial and imperial levels of sovereignty, and partly because of the nearly constant warfare—notably the Thirty Years’ War—to which this competition greatly contributed. Second, however, second-rank German territorial states could only expand taxation and conscription by granting privileges to local corporative elites and institutions: rulers allied with local communities and guilds to impose an intense regulation of

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22 For detailed micro-studies documenting these characteristics of the early modern Württemberg economy, see David Sabeen, Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870 (Cambridge, 1990); Ogilvie, State Corporatism; Hans Medick, Weben und Überleben in Laichingen, 1650–1900 (Göttingen, 1996).

23 For detailed evidence on the activities of women throughout the early modern Württemberg economy, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 115–27, 141–46, 207–17, 272–79.


26 Vann, Making of a State, 36; on the typicality of such second-rank states in Germany, see Ogilvie, “German State,” 169–73.

individual economic, social, and demographic behavior, which was seen as beneficial by respectable male citizens and guild masters but which weighed particularly heavily on females.\textsuperscript{28} Such intensity of regulation was not observed in societies—such as England and the Low Countries—where the state was secure enough largely to dispense with pandering to local interest groups.\textsuperscript{29} The third characteristic of Württemberg, in which it resembled many other German territories, was that its state did not become strong enough to free itself from symbiotic reliance on corporative local interest groups until well into the nineteenth century. This gave rise to a sort of legal and institutional paralysis during which most of the sexual and economic legislation affecting women remained virtually unchanged, in both letter and execution, until after 1800.\textsuperscript{30}

One of the most important of the corporative local interest groups that enjoyed state support was the guild. In Württemberg, as in many other parts of early modern Central and Southern Europe, guilds were not restricted to urban crafts but governed rural workshops as well.\textsuperscript{31} They regulated not just traditional handicrafts but export-oriented proto-industries, primary-sector activities such as fishing and wine growing, and a wide array of service-sector activities such as shopkeeping and merchant trading.\textsuperscript{32} In addition, guild-like merchant associations monopolized most sectors of commerce and manufacturing, including the important worsened proto-industry of the Black Forest and the linen proto-industry of the Swabian Jura.\textsuperscript{33} As late as 1793, one north German traveler through Württemberg remarked disappointingly that “the greatest share of trade and manufactures is in the hands of closed and for the most part privileged associations.”\textsuperscript{34} Guilds regulated who could set up a workshop, who could be employed, how much they could be paid, what techniques could be used, and what products could be made in many sectors of the Württemberg economy well into the nineteenth century. It was 1864 before the Württemberg state felt secure in abolishing guilds.\textsuperscript{35}

A second corporative interest group that regulated the Württemberg economy and women’s participation in it was the local community. In Württemberg, as in many other parts of early modern Germany, people held citizenship (\textit{Bürgerrecht})


\textsuperscript{30} On this, see Hull, \textit{Sexuality}, for example 41, 128.


\textsuperscript{32} See Ogilvie, \textit{State Corporatism}, 72–79.

\textsuperscript{33} Walter Troeltsch, \textit{Die Calver Zeughandlungskompagnie und ihre Arbeiter} (Jena, 1897); Ogilvie, \textit{State Corporatism}, 77–79, 106–11; Medick, \textit{Weben}, esp. 65–140.


or settlement rights (*Beisitzrecht*) in their community first and foremost, and in the nation only by virtue of their community membership.\(^3\) The villages and tiny towns of rural Württemberg operated their own autonomous community courts, appointed a myriad of community officials (about one-fifth of male household heads held some communal office), and met in regular face-to-face community assemblies. Local studies reveal that communities exercised intense surveillance and control over crop choice, farming techniques, agricultural and industrial markets, citizenship, settlement, marriage, mobility, inheritance, residential arrangements, sexuality, education, diligence, leisure, and consumption.\(^3\) This gave rise to a dense network of multi-threaded interactions among community members. Communities, too, remained strong in Württemberg well into the nineteenth century, and helped underpin many of the regulations that affected women’s economic position, particularly the notorious political restriction of marriage permits (*politische Ehekonsens*) and the persistent exclusion of females from many economic activities.\(^3\)

Early modern Württemberg was thus characterized by a very stable, interlocking system of social institutions—state, guild, and local community—that can be observed in operation, manifesting only the most glacial change, over a period of centuries. This equilibrium only began to break down in the nineteenth century, after the period under analysis in this article—and even then very slowly. Consequently, Württemberg is not well suited to analyzing great legal and institutional transformations such as the transition from “absolutism” to “civil society,” at least not until long after 1800.\(^3\) It is ideally suited, however, by virtue

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\(^3\) The meanings contemporaries attached to these concepts are illustrated in the Württemberg citizenship law of 1833, which stated, “The communities are the foundation of the state. Every citizen of the state must, insofar as this law . . . does not justify an exception for him, belong to a community as Bürger or Beisitzer . . . No citizen of the state . . . can marry, hold public office, practice any occupation on his own account or with his own household, or even keep an independent dwelling, before he possesses the right of citizenship or Beisitz in a community.” Revidirtes Gesetz über das Gemeinde- Bürger- und Beisitzrecht” (December 4, 1833), in A. L. Reyscher, ed., *Vollständige, historisch und kritisch bearbeitete Sammlung der württembergische Gesetze*, 19 vols. (Stuttgart, 1828–51), vol. 15.2: 1064–90, here 1064. For a detailed analysis of how Bürgerrecht and Beisitzrecht worked in practice, see Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, 45–57.


\(^3\) Even in the more “advanced” German territories, this transition was very gradual and hardly visible except among the literate, urban bourgeoisie until the very late eighteenth century, and in many German territories of the second rank, including Württemberg, there was little observable change in legal or institutional treatment of women before 1800. On this, see, for example, Hull, *Sexuality*, 6, 9, 128, 357, 408–09.
of its particularly strong and cohesive social networks, to assessing the impact of a very stable and long-lived historical equilibrium in which social capital played a major role.

Let us start by looking at what light a social capital approach to Württemberg’s rural-urban guilds sheds on women’s position—and what light guilds’ treatment of women sheds on social capital. As already mentioned, social capital theorists explicitly adduce preindustrial European guilds as exemplars of social networks generating beneficial social capital. Thus Robert Putnam holds that northern Italy’s strong guilds created a social capital of information transmission, norm enforcement, and collective action that benefited the entire economy and society; by contrast, lack of this strong guild framework is supposed to be what led to governmental and economic failure in the Italian south. Francis Fukuyama argues that present-day Germany manifests unusually high levels of trust and social capital, as a result of its historical heritage, in which guilds played an important role. Likewise, economists working on present-day developing and transition economies adduce the preindustrial European guild as an example of a social network generating a beneficial social capital for society at large. In a recent speech, for instance, the chief economist of the World Bank listed “guilds” among those institutions that, by generating social capital, could “support entrepreneurial efforts” in East European transition economies.

Early modern German guilds certainly manifested the two features that social capital theorists have identified as helping social networks generate social capital—“closure” and “multiplex relationships.” “Closure” means that network membership is clearly and finely defined, increasing the density of interactions between members and thereby intensifying the quality and reliability of the information sharing and third-party monitoring needed to enforce cooperation. Guilds in Württemberg, as in most of preindustrial Europe, clearly defined membership through limiting admission to apprenticeship, journeymanship, and mastership, and monitoring who was allowed to participate in activities reserved for guild members. As we shall see, “closure” did help guilds generate social capital that benefited their members, but it also helped them generate social capital that harmed outsiders—such as women—with damaging repercussions on the entire economy and society.

Guilds were also characterized by “multiplex relationships,” the other key

40 Putnam, Leonard, and Nanetti, Making Democracy Work, 125–37, 162, 229 n. 20.
41 Fukuyama, Trust, 345–53, 336.
feature theorists view as helping to create social capital. Interacting in multiple spheres—economic, religious, social, political—ensures that members of a social network have multiple means of getting information about, punishing deviance in, and urging collective action on one another.46 Guilds in Württemberg, as in other parts of early modern Europe, were indeed characterized by such multi-stranded internal ties. Members of the worsted weavers’ guild in the Württemberg district of

Wildberg, for instance, transacted in the same markets, socialized over wine at their regular tavern, held frequent face-to-face assemblies of the entire membership, collaborated on petitions to the government, marched to Stuttgart to hold political demonstrations, and attended each other’s weddings and funerals.47

Early modern German guilds therefore possessed the closure and multiplex relationships generally regarded as helping networks create social capital. But how did this social capital affect women, and what does it tell us about the broader impact of social capital on vulnerable groups and society as a whole? Guilds directly influenced the economic position of women in four main ways. First, they controlled vocational training. Second, they defined which households could engage in certain occupations and which household members could do certain tasks. Third, guilds regulated the transmission of professional licenses from male masters to their widows. Finally, guilds influenced the wages paid within the economic sectors they controlled.

Throughout Europe, guilds were central to vocational training, and in Württemberg they monopolized it: non-guild apprenticeships were not permitted.48 Wholly female guilds were extremely rare in Europe (only five are recorded for German-speaking Central Europe and none for England); they were found only in large cities (four of the German ones were in Cologne); and they were restricted to certain sectors (especially seamstressing, gold working, and silk making).49 In the majority of guilds, female apprentices and hence female masters (other than masters’ widows) were an extremely unusual phenomenon: they are observed in a handful of medieval European societies, and in England, Scotland, and France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even in these exceptionally liberal guilds, females generally formed a tiny minority.50 In most parts of Europe, including

Württemberg, girls could not be apprentices even to this limited extent. As the Jena jurist Adrian Beier put it in 1685, "Masculine sex is one of the indispensable basic preconditions for admission to a guild. The entire social order... is based upon each sex taking on those tasks which are most fitting to its nature." Or, as Johann Friderich Christoph Weissner wrote in his 1783 treatise on Württemberg industrial legislation, "Anyone who wants to learn a craft has to possess particular qualities, which are necessary because without them no one can be accepted as an apprentice and registered with a guild. Among these qualities is... masculine sex, since no female may properly practice a craft, even if she understands it just as well as a male person."

Local documentary sources show that these regulations were sedulously enforced. Guilds in Württemberg penalized anyone who sought to learn or practice a craft or proto-industry without being formally apprenticed to it, and carefully registered all incoming and outgoing apprentices by name. Of the 1,258 apprentices admitted by the proto-industrial worsted weavers' guild in the ten communities of the district of Wildberg between 1598 and 1760, none was female. The same was true of other rural-urban guilds whose records survive, such as woollen broadcloth weavers, butchers, and bakers. Of the fifty pauper apprenticeships arranged by the church courts of Ebhausen and Wildberg between 1646 and 1800, none was for a girl. Guilds thus effectively excluded girls from the main form of formal vocational training in the Württemberg economy.

It might be argued, as some economic historians have recently sought to do, that guilds' exclusion of females simply reflected the natural order. It was natural and understandable that guilds should exclude females: "women were mostly restricted to activities learned informally at home" and hence had no demand for guild training. This echoes arguments used by guild masters at the time, concerned to defend their privileges against female competition.

Empirical findings cast doubt on such arguments. First, in Württemberg as in


53 Adrian Beier, Der Lehrlinge, 5th edn. (Jena, 1717), 35.
54 Johann Fridrich Christoph Weissner, Das Recht der Handwerker nach allgemeinen Grundsätzen und insbesondere nach dem herzoglichen Württembergischen Gesetzen entworfen (Stuttgart, 1780), 99–100: "Von einem Jeden, der ein Handwerk erlernen will, werden gewisse Eigenschaften erfordert, welche insgesamt dergestalten notwendig sind, daß ohne sie keiner zum Lehrlingen angenommen, und bei der Zunft eingeschrieben wird. Unter diese Eigenschaften gehört... Das männliche Geschlecht; denn ordentlicher Weise darf kein Weibsbild ein Handwerk treiben, ob sie es gleich eben so gut, als eine Mansperver, verstündete."

55 HSAS, A573 Bü. 777–911 (1598–1762); for the details of the quantitative analysis, see Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 139–79.
56 HSAS, A573 Bü. 912–48 (woollen broadcloth weavers), Bü. 949–1018 (bakers), Bü. 1019 (butchers).
57 PAW KKP, Vols. 1–8 (1646–1800); PAE KKP, Vols. 1–8 (1674–1800); and Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 99.

59 Roper, Holy Household, 46; Kathy Stuart, Deified Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany (Cambridge, 2000), 214; Hafter, "Women in the Underground,"
many other Western European societies, women married in their late twenties, 15–20 percent of them never married at all, and at any one time more than half of all females of prime working age were not married. These demographic realities gave women a strong incentive to learn vocational skills.58 Second, the wives and widows of masters were permitted to do guilded work, under a husband’s guild license. Thus between 1641 and 1760, 11–14 percent of active worsted weavers in the ten communities of the district of Wildberg were masters’ widows, practicing under their husbands’ guild licenses. In the database described earlier, consisting of 2,828 cases of observed work extracted from church-court records, 6 percent of the observed work of married women and 8 percent of the observed work of widows was in guilded activities.59 Such women, too, had a demand for vocational training.60 Finally, as we shall see, unmarried females were regarded as dangerous competitors by male journeymen and masters, and were persecuted when they encroached on tasks (such as wool combing or cloth weaving) reserved for male guild members. That is, women were not mostly restricted to domestic activities but had the desire and ability to work in guilded sectors.61 By excluding girls from apprenticeship, therefore, guilds were not simply reflecting the natural order but were deliberately enforcing what modern economists term “pre-market” gender discrimination in the labor market.62

A second way guilds affected women’s position was by defining and enforcing occupational demarcations. No one could legitimately work at a particular guilded activity without being a member of a master’s household, and even within masters’ households guilds reserved certain tasks for males. It might be thought that this was natural and reasonable, since all production took place within the household, and women could work under the guild licenses of their husbands, fathers, or masters. But the evidence shows that not all production took place within households, and not all women desirous of doing craft work enjoyed kinship ties to men with the appropriate guild licenses. These guild rules prevented women of all marital statuses from making a full contribution to the economy.

Thus, for instance, guild privileges prevented a married woman from practicing a different occupation from her husband, as in 1711, when the Bottwar shopkeepers’ guild demanded that a village widow’s shop be closed and her wares confiscated.


because she had married a dyer, or in 1742, when an Effringen soldier’s wife was jailed after a nailsmith reported her to the community assembly for encroaching on his guild privileges. This might not seem to matter, until we recognize that many women were married to men who were economically incapable or abusive. A database of 313 marital conflict cases in two Württemberg communities between 1646 and 1800 reveals that one-quarter involved economic failings on the part of the husband, one-quarter involved regular drunkenness by the husband, nearly half involved physical abuse by the husband, and more than one-tenth involved the husband depriving the wife of food. Guild demarcations meant that an abused or deprived wife could not conduct a craft, proto-industry, or small shop of her own, but rather was forced, like one Wildberg weaver’s battered wife in 1661, to “earn her food bitterly with spinning.”

Guild demarcations also prevented widows from moving into occupations that better suited their capacities after their husbands died. Widows who did so were reported by guild members and punished by the guild, as in 1636, when a woollen weaver’s widow was fined more than a week’s average earnings by the worsted weavers’ guild because “she took it upon herself to practice the craft, even though her deceased husband had never been apprenticed to worsted-making,” or in 1764, when a village widow was punished for violating the bakers’ guild privileges by trading in grain. Catharina Fuchs, a poor day laborer’s widow, was only granted a princely dispensation to open a tiny shop in 1652 on the grounds that she and her crippled son “will be able to sell nothing other than the ribbons they themselves make, matches, and such poor things, so [the shopkeepers’ guild] will suffer no injury or encroachment.”

But guild demarcations weighed most heavily on never-married women, who made up 40 percent of all females of prime working age (fifteen to sixty-four years), but were only allowed to do guilded work under the guild licenses of fathers or masters, and even then were excluded from many tasks. The proto-industrial worsted weavers, for instance, outlawed the numerous unmarried female weft-makers in 1611, ordering that “such daughters be kept to other and necessary domestic tasks and business, or caused to enter into honorable service.” From

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63 HSAS, A228 Bü. 713, no. 7, fol. 4r, September 29, 1711.
64 HSAS, A573 Bü. 95, fol. 6v, January 25, 1742.
66 For a detailed analysis of this database, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 179–94, esp. tables 4.8–4.10.
68 HSAS, A573 Bü. 810 (1635–36), unpag., rubric “Strafen”: “hatt sich vnderstanden daß handwerckh zuetreiben, angesehen doch ihr mann see: daß engelsait machen nie erleht.”
69 HSAS, A573 Bü. 95, fol. 28v, December 17, 1764.
71 “Engelsattelwerbeordnung in A. 1608 [actually 1611] vgerichtet,” rpt. in Troeltsch, Die Calwer
then onward, the guild fined any master who employed an unmarried woman to do anything other than spin or run errands, as in 1669, when Hannß Schrotter was fined three weeks’ average earnings for “setting his servant girl behind the loom and having her weave”—a strong deterrent to others thinking of letting unmarried women do prohibited guild work.72 Unmarried women who wished to weave cloth, make wefts, or comb wool were forced into the black market, where they risked heavy fines, as in 1754, when Juliana Schweickertin, a fifty-year-old independent unmarried woman, was fined nearly a third of a maidservant’s annual wage for “weaving and combing, counter to the guild ordinance.”73 Even without perfect enforcement, the level of fines imposed cannot but have deterred the marginal black-market worker. This is borne out by the church-court database of 2,828 cases of observed work that has already been mentioned: it records many other illegal work activities but only three cases of black-market guilded work by unmarried females.74 This contrasts with the situation in more dynamic early modern economies, where by the eighteenth century many guilds had either already largely given up the struggle to exclude female workers (as in England and the Low Countries) or were in the process of doing so (as in Scotland or France).75

Guilds’ use of their social capital of shared norms, information, and collective sanctions to enforce their monopoly undoubtedly benefited guild masters. But it forced many women into marginal activities such as spinning, begging, and the exploitive black-market “informal sector.” Thus in a 1736 “soul-table” for ten Württemberg communities, 86 percent of never-married females depended wholly or partly on spinning for a livelihood, and 18 percent wholly or partly on charity. Even widows depended 60 percent on spinning and 12 percent on charity. The equivalent figures for men were 1 percent dependent on spinning, 2 percent on charity.76 Furthermore, by excluding women from guilded sectors, guilds increased the supply of female workers in unguilded sectors, thereby lowering their wages—a form of “pre-market” labor discrimination that economists term “occupational crowding.”77

Guilds also affected women in a third way, by regulating widows’ rights to continue family workshops. Some, such as the guild-like merchant-dyers’ association that enjoyed a legal monopoly over dyeing and exporting Württemberg worsted, simply prohibited any widow from continuing to trade after her husband’s

Zeughandlungkompagnie, 435–53, here article 20, 446: “dergleichen Töchtern zue andern vnd nohtwendigen hauss Arbeiten vnd geschäfftien Anzuehllithen, oder sich In Ehrliche Dienst einzuelassen verursacht werden.”

72 HSAS, A573 Bü. 92, fol. 5v, November 1, 1669: “Sein dienst mägdtln . . . hindern Stuehl zue sez. vnd weeben zuelub.”

73 HSAS, A573 Bü. 904 (1752–53), unpag., rubric “Strafen”: “wider die Ordnung weeben und kämen.”

74 For a detailed discussion of the compilation, representativeness, and reliability of this database, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 22–36.


76 HSAS, A573 Bü. 6967 (1736); for a detailed breakdown of women’s livelihood sources as revealed in this source, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, esp. 214–15 (table 5.4).

death.78 But most guild members wanted to make some provision for their own widows in the future, without permitting too much competition against themselves now. So most guilds allowed a master’s widow to continue the workshop but imposed restrictions that limited her viability as a competitor.

Their main strategy was to make it hard for widows to replace lost spousal labor. Thus guilds cancelled widows’ (but not widowers’) guild licenses if they remarried,79 as in 1711, when the Stammheim shopkeepers’ guild demanded that a widow close her small shop when she remarried, “in order to maintain us by our just rights.”80 Guilds forbade the use of daughters for many guilded tasks, yet demographic realities meant that half of all widows lacked resident sons of any age.81 This left widows dependent on hired labor, but here guild rules were strict. Even for male masters, guilds prohibited hiring cheap female labor and limited the number of (relatively costly) apprentices and journeymen each master could employ. For widows, guild rules were much stricter and increased their costs above those of male guild members.82 The cheapest guilded labor was an apprentice, but nearly all guilds prohibited widows from employing one. Many deprived a widow even of existing apprentices, transferring them immediately to other (male) employers. Others let a widow keep existing apprentices, but imposed conditions: the apprentice must be the widow’s own son, or nearly finished with his contract, or supervised by a (costly) journeyman. Many guilds only let widows practice at all if they employed journeymen, who were so expensive that few masters of either sex could afford them, especially in rural areas.83 Others limited the kinds of work widows could do, even with journeymen, as in 1598, when Michel Zeller’s widow was heavily fined for employing a journeyman to comb wool in her attic—although no guild article forbade this.84 Quantitative analysis of local censuses, account books, and guild registers show that these regulations were strictly implemented: guilds carefully regulated how often a master could take on an apprentice, the number and background of boys admitted to apprenticeship (and thus ultimately journeymanship), the length of journeymanship, and the hiring of non-guild (especially female) labor.85 As a result, no widows kept apprentices, few kept journeymen, and many were forced to give up the workshop altogether, faced with the discriminatory costs the guilds imposed on them.86

Guilds also discriminated against widows in other ways. Many made a widow’s
license to practice conditional on her behaving "honorably," a catchall discretionary clause blatantly open to abuse by local guild officials and male masters concerned to limit competition, here as elsewhere in preindustrial Europe.\textsuperscript{87} No guild permitted widows any say in the collective decisionmaking of the guild, the election of guild officers, or the formulation of guild regulations.\textsuperscript{88} And Württemberg guilds were not even the most restrictive: in many other European societies, guilds altogether denied a widow the right to continue the workshop, restricted her to indoor work only, limited the time period for which she could practice after her husband's death, made it conditional on her having a son to take over, limited the size of her workshop, permitted her to make only certain products, or assigned her a lower rate of pay than male masters.\textsuperscript{89} Guilds thus used their social capital of common norms, shared information, and collective action to protect their male members from competition even by fellow members' widows.

A fourth and final way in which guilds affected women was by legally capping their earnings in the few tasks they were allowed to do. The tailors' guilds, for example, permitted women to work as seamstresses but restricted them to certain tasks,\textsuperscript{90} and artificially capped the day-wage of an experienced seamstress at a level lower than that of an apprentice lad, less than half that of a journeyman, and less than a third that of a master.\textsuperscript{91} Likewise, the weavers' guilds permitted unmarried women to spin but imposed piece-rate ceilings lower than the market rate, as in 1654, when they secured a charter stating that "spinning a pound [of yarn] shall be paid at as high a wage as the [weavers'] guild agrees among its members, the dyers as well as the worsted weavers shall support this in all ways, and each master shall then infallibly stick to the agreed wage."\textsuperscript{92}

Local court records show that guild members who offered higher rates to spinners suffered formal and informal sanctions, as in 1623, when Hans Pfeiffer was suspected of having paid "Röbelin's wife" 10 Kreuzer above the guild rate ceiling: he immediately found his fellow guild masters "spreading rumors about him," interrogating the spinner, and "seeking to bring him to punishment before the


\textsuperscript{88} This was the case even in the comparatively liberal French guilds, as shown in Truant, "La maîtrise," 1, 5–7. For additional German examples, see Weisser, \textit{Recht}, 183; Roper, \textit{Holy Household}, 40, 49.


\textsuperscript{91} HSAS, A573 Bü. 5279 (1642); A573 Bü. 5280 (1654); A573 Bü. 5281 (1669).

guild”; ultimately, Pfeiffer went to court “to rescue his honor.”

Guilds actively enforced the piece-rate ceilings, fining individual weavers who dishonorably betrayed their fellow guild masters by paying spinners “too much,” and confiscating raw wool and spun yarn from village spinners working for “outsiders” willing to pay them a market rate. Undoubtedly, some spinners earned a little more by black-market work, but the regulations still harmed them: evading rules cost time, penalties were substantial, and breaking the law laid spinners open to confiscation, exploitation, and blackmail. There were also wider effects: the piece-rate ceilings created disincentives for spinners to produce the finer wool and adopt the technological innovations required to increase yarn—and hence cloth—quality. By using their social capital to create a shared norm that paying spinners a market wage was “dishonorable,” to publicize information about violations of this norm, and to ensure that violators were punished, guilds harmed not just the female spinners but the wider economy. One must surely ask whether the cost of this social capital, which was disproportionately paid by women, did not outweigh any benefits enjoyed by guild members.

It might be argued that guilds did not matter, since the women they excluded simply worked illegally in the black market or “informal sector.” This argument has recently been adduced by economic historians concerned to rehabilitate guilds from criticisms that they inflicted harm on non-members whom they prevented from earning a living. But, as studies of the “informal sector” in modern poor economies show, forcing people to work on the black market instead of in open and regulated formal markets not only reduces contract enforcement and worker protection (thereby harming the weakest economic agents) but also increases costs and risks and distorts incentives (thereby inflicting deadweight losses on the whole economy). Formal-sector social networks such as guilds, by using their social capital to force non-members into the “informal sector,” harm not just the outsiders who are prevented from earning a legal living but also the economy as a whole. Those early modern European societies that ceased to force women (and other excluded groups) into the informal sector were also, and not coincidentally, those whose economies flourished.

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93 HSAS, A573 Bü.15, fol. 618r, February 20, 1623; “hette ih n . . . gleich verschreijen”; “hette ih vor dem handtwerckh, begehren in ein straff zupringen”; “zu rettung seiner ehren.”

94 For a detailed discussion of these regulations and their impact on the industry, see Troeltsch, Die Calwer Zeughandlungscompagnie, 125–31; Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 353–55; Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 307–08.

95 Troeltsch, Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie, 125–31; Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 352–60; Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 307–08.


98 For additional evidence and arguments to this effect, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 344–52.
How Does Social Capital Affect Women?

It might not seem surprising that the social capital generated by guilds was used in ways that harmed women. Most historians of women’s work have in recent years come to a clear-sighted recognition that there was no “pre-capitalist” golden age within the guild framework, although economic historians are taking much longer to face up to the same empirical findings. But the effect of community institutions on women has hitherto hardly been examined, and there is still a very widespread tendency to accept communitarian rhetoric at face value. Only gradually are historians bringing into the light of day what communities actually did to women and incorporating these findings into our understanding of what “community” means in practice.

The acceptance of communitarian rhetoric at face value is exemplified in much of the social capital literature, which explicitly adduces preindustrial European communities as exemplars of social networks generating a social capital that benefited the entire society. Thus Robert Putnam has argued that the strong urban communities of medieval and early modern northern Italy facilitated social capital in ways denied to southern Italy, where communities were weaker. James Coleman and many others have argued that closely knit village communities such as those of preindustrial Switzerland generated social capital that improved the efficiency of resource management and contract enforcement, thereby benefiting the entire society.

Certainly, it seems justified to view preindustrial communities as examples of social capital in action. For one thing, they satisfy in full measure social capital


101 For outstanding recent examples, see the sensitive and innovative study of Jewish and Catholic women in a confessionally mixed community in eighteenth-century Lorraine by Ulbrich, Shulamit, esp. 35, 138, 306; and the wide-ranging survey of sexual regulation in eighteenth-century Germany by Hull, Sexuality, 36–41. On the concepts of community, fraternity, and citizenship as fundamentally and inevitably male-dominated, see Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Cambridge, 1989), esp. 33, 41, 49–50.


103 Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, Making Democracy Work, 123–37, 162.

theorists’ two criteria of “closure” and “multiplex relationships.”105 Thus in Württemberg, as in Switzerland and other societies characterized by strong communities, villages and small towns achieved “closure” by regulating citizenship, settlement, migration, marriage, and household formation.106 Until well into the nineteenth century, many German communities regulated precisely which inhabitants could become full community members, by deliberately granting marriage permits only to “economically and morally strong persons,” thereby ensuring “closure” for themselves as social networks.107

Preindustrial communities also manifested a high density of “multiplex relationships.” Members of Württemberg communities transacted with one another in the marketplace, attended the same church (non-Lutherans were generally denied citizenship, and church attendance was closely monitored), and met regularly in face-to-face community assemblies where each citizen was asked if he had anything to report.108 These multi-stranded relationships among community members allowed “the resources of one relationship to be appropriated for use in others,” making it more possible to generate a social capital of common norms, shared information, and collective sanctions.109

But how did this social capital actually work? In particular, pursuing our theme, how did it affect the position of weaker economic agents such as females? The local community was so central to Württemberg society that it influenced the position of women in a wide variety of ways. Here I single out six for special attention. First, communities decided whether an individual could live locally at all. Second, they administered the system of gender tutelage governing who was regarded as a legal adult. Third, they regulated the sale, exchange, and inheritance of land. Fourth, they regulated the wages that could be paid in labor markets. Fifth, they controlled access to common resources. And finally, they regulated consumption.

The first thing to understand is that communities did not recognize females as full members.110 The son of an existing community citizen automatically inherited full citizenship rights, including the right to bring in a wife from outside. But a citizen’s daughter was only endowed with right of residence until she married. She could not endow her husband with citizenship, and if she failed to marry (as 15–20 percent of Württemberg women did), even her residence was conditional on good behavior.111

It might be argued that such regulations were both necessary and natural—

106 Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 45–57.
108 Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 57–72; Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 20, 332–34.
111 On women’s lack of full community membership in other parts of preindustrial Germany and Europe, see Merry E. Wiesner, “Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany,” in Sherrin Marshall, ed., Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 8–28, here 19; Hull, Sexuality, 31; Maria Bogucka, “Women and Economic Life in the Polish Cities during the 16th–17th Centuries,” in Cavaciocchi, La donna, 185–94, here 186; P. J. P.
necessory because otherwise communities could not achieve the “closure” required to generate social capital, and natural because females enjoyed community membership by being the daughters or wives of citizens. But the empirical findings show otherwise. Local women whose husbands lacked community citizenship were hindered from making a living, as in 1793, when inhabitants of Gültlingen were ordered to deny further shelter to a non-citizen’s wife who was “roaming around under the pretext of collecting rags, equipped with a slip of paper from [the paper-miller], but without any official permit.”\(^{112}\) Community councils routinely ordered citizens’ unmarried daughters to leave the community, for allegedly causing conflict, being idle, arousing neighbors’ complaints, or threatening imprudent marriages, as in 1767, when a Wildberg widow’s daughter was “warned in the highest terms against her intended marriage with the night watchman and instructed that instead of hurling herself into misfortune she shall immediately betake herself into service elsewhere.”\(^{113}\) Communities ejected maidservants who allegedly caused conflict in households, created sexual temptations for local men, were reported as promiscuous, absconded from abusive masters, tried to set up in business independently, or even simply brought poor reputations from other communities, as in 1718, when Josua Reulin’s Catholic maidservant was thrown out of Pfondorf on the grounds that she had already been “ordered away by other localities in the neighborhood.”\(^{114}\)

Above all, unmarried women living in lodgings independently rather than as members of households were pejoratively labeled Eigenbrötlerinnen (“own-breaders”) and continually harassed by community councils, even though they made up nearly 10 percent of the female population and headed 6 percent of those units regarded as responsible for earning their own livelihoods.\(^{115}\) A complaint by a male citizen was usually enough to ensure that an Eigenbrötlerin was ejected, as in 1717, when the Ebhausen council responded to citizen complaints by ordering three local Eigenbrötlerinnen to “move away within eight days,”\(^{116}\) in 1752, when Barbara Kleiner was reported by her Wildberg landlord and promptly ordered “to refrain from Eigenbrötlen, and instead enter into a proper job as a servant, otherwise she shall be driven out of town by order of the authorities,”\(^{117}\) or in 1787, when a

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\(^{112}\) HSAS, A573 Bū. 100, fol. 28r–v, 1793; “und das Weib durchstreife mit einem Zettel von Rivinius versehen, jedoch ohm Patent, unter dem Vorwand des Lumpensammelns.”

\(^{113}\) For the latter example, see PAE KKP, Vol. 6, fol. 124r–v, March 18, 1763; “ire vorhabende Mariage mit dem Nachwärchter Günther äußerstens abgerath. und die weisung gegeben worden, daß sie, statt sich in ein Unglück zu sturzen, sich nechstens in einen aus wärtigen dienst begeben.” For further examples of ejection of citizens’ daughters, and more detailed analysis, see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 135–36.

\(^{114}\) For the latter example, see PAE KKP, Vol. 3, p. 52, May 8, 1718; “an andern orten in der nachbarschaft weggebotten worden ist.” For additional examples of ejections of maidservants, and more detailed analysis, see Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 309–17.


\(^{116}\) PAE KKP, Vol. 3, p. 16, April 16, 1717; “innerhalb 8 tagen wegZiehen.”

\(^{117}\) HSAS, A573 Bū. 95, fol. 31v, December 14, 1752: “sich deß Eigebrötlen zu bemüßigen,
Pfrondorf was ordered “not to anger the community by giving any further shelter” to the independent spinster Magdalena Braun.\footnote{PAE KKP, Vol. 7, fol. 65r, August 15, 1787.}

These attitudes toward independent females can be observed in most parts of preindustrial Europe.\footnote{See, for instance, the censorious attitudes toward “singlewomen” discussed in Bennett and Friode, “Singular Past,” esp. 14–15.} But they were effectively enforced in some societies—notably in German-speaking Central Europe—and much less thoroughly in others.\footnote{Wiesner, “Having,” esp. 194–97; Rublack, Crimes, 139, 149, 152–58, 162–63, 256.} What made the difference was the availability of institutional mechanisms to put them into action—or, to put it in the terms of modern social scientists, the existence of social networks able to generate and sustain a social capital of shared norms about such women, efficient information transfer about their activities, and collective sanctions against them. Substantial male citizens naturally welcomed the existence of community social capital that enabled them to eject any female who threatened their interests. But many women’s revealed preferences suggest that it was not best for the women themselves. Nor is it clear that it was most productive for the economy at large.

Communities affected women’s position in a second way by subjecting those females who \textit{were} permitted to dwell in the community to a system of gender tutelage (\textit{Geschlechtsvormundschaft}) under which they were not legal adults. Gender tutelage was imposed on Württemberg women in the 1555 national law code, but local court records suggest that it was widely ignored until around 1600, when community councils began to enforce it.\footnote{Antonie Kraut, \textit{Die Stellung der Frau im württembergischen Privatrecht: Eine Untersuchung über Geschlechtsvormundschaft und Interzessionsfrage} (Tübingen, 1934); “Erstes Landrecht” (May 6, 1555), in Reyscher, \textit{Vollständige Sammlung}, 4; 95, referring to “Zweites Landrecht” (July 1, 1567), 171–420, where differences between the 1555 and the 1567 version are recorded in the footnotes, here esp. 231; David Sabean, “Allianzen und Listen: Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert,” in Ute Gerhard, ed., \textit{Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart} (Munich, 1997), 460–79; Sabean, \textit{Property}, 208–14; Ogilvie, \textit{Bitter Living}, 249–52.} From then on, women were increasingly denied access to justice and contract enforcement unless accompanied by male guardians—an unmarried woman had to be supported by her Pfleger, a wife or widow by her Kriegsvogt.

Some have portrayed gender tutelage as a beneficent arrangement that protected women from exploitation by their husbands.\footnote{Sabean, “Allianzen,” 461.} However, careful examination of local-level documentary sources tells a rather different tale. Pfleger and Kriegsvögte were appointed by community councils, were often themselves council members, and—in Württemberg as in other parts of Europe—were used by communities to exercise surveillance and control over women, particularly spinsters or widows.\footnote{Annamarie Rytter, “Die Geschlechtsvormundschaft in der Schweiz: das Beispiel der Kanton Basel-Landschaft und Basel-Stadt,” in Ute Gerhard, ed., \textit{Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart} (Munich, 1997), 494–506, here 496–502.} Community councils imposed guardians on women accused of conflictual or sexually suspicious behavior, forbade women to litigate without guardians, permitted male transaction partners to refuse to deal with women...
without guardians present, compelled women to involve guardians in economic transactions, and pressed women to submit to unwelcome economic decisions taken by guardians, as in 1621, when a deserted wife in Oberjettingen was pressed by her Kriegsvoigt to sell her property against her will.\textsuperscript{124} There even appears to have been an expectation that a widow obtain the consent of her guardians before remarrying, as in 1674, when an Altbulach widow became betrothed to a man on condition that “he become a community citizen and her Kriegsvoigt give his agreement.”\textsuperscript{125} Unmarried women found it hard to rid themselves of careless or abusive guardians. Thus in 1784, the Wildberg council only permitted the forty-eight-year-old Maria Barbara Wildeisin to wrest her small inheritance from two negligent, community-appointed guardians because she was “known to be mature enough to do this at her present age and to be of an economical way of life,” and because another male citizen had “offered to supervise her, as guardian.”\textsuperscript{126}

In Württemberg, as in other parts of Europe, gender tutelage enabled communities to prevent women from making decisions of which they disapproved. But men, though equally likely to threaten communal welfare, were subjected to no such tutelage. Furthermore, gender tutelage laid a woman open to abuse by negligent or fraudulent guardians, and prevented her from making decisions of which her guardian disapproved, even when—as with remarrying or disposing of her property—she saw it as her best choice.\textsuperscript{127}

A third way in which communities affected women was through the discretion community councils enjoyed in regulating local property markets.\textsuperscript{128} Court records show that Württemberg community councils frequently used this discretion to transfer property from the hands of widows (whom they regarded as unreliable) into those of adult males. Thus in 1592, Georg Lodholz’s widow in Ebhausen complained that her married son had simply taken possession of one of her fields, but her son prevailed on a large number of village council members to testify in his favor, and she lost the field.\textsuperscript{129} In 1624, Jauß Roller’s widow in Liebelsberg complained that her offspring had “got together behind her back and sold [her] meadow to the village bailiff, without her knowledge and against her will”; challenged, the bailiff admitted that “yes, he had bought it and paid for it, whereupon she asked why she hadn’t been informed, to which he responded, what harm would it do if such an old animal [as she] should die of hunger?”\textsuperscript{130} In 1664,

\textsuperscript{124} For the latter example, see HSAS, A573 Bü. 15, fol. 545v, August 25, 1621. For all other examples, and analogous cases from other parts of early modern Europe, see Ogilvie, \textit{Bitter Living}, 249–52.

\textsuperscript{125} PAW KKP, Vol. 3, p. 624, February 16, 1674: “wann Er burger werde vnd . . . Ihr Kriegsvoigt Seinen willen darein gebe.”

\textsuperscript{126} HSAS, A573 Bü. 49, fol. 112r–v, June 10, 1784: “weil bekannt, daß Sie zumal bey ihrem gegenwärtigen Alter hierzu selbst gewachsen und eine haushälterische Lebens-Art habe”; “erbotten, daß er als Curator über dieselbe Aufsicht haben.”

\textsuperscript{127} For a detailed discussion, see Ryter, “Geschlechtsvormundchaft,” 498–502; Ogilvie, \textit{Bitter Living}, 249–52.


\textsuperscript{129} HSAS, A573 Bü. 12, fol. 46v, March 9, 1592; A573 Bü. 12, fol. 55v–57v, March 13, 1592.

\textsuperscript{130} HSAS, A573 Bü. 16, fol. 64r–v, June 3, 1624: “hetten hinderrucks ihren solch mad, gegen dem schulltheussen . . . v.kaufft, welches also, ohn ihr wissen vndt willen, gefertigt worden”; “ja, er habs
the widowed Anna Stenglin in Liebelsberg complained that her sons-in-law had sold off her property against her will, and that the village council had ratified the sale in the teeth of her written objections because “all the members of the community council who were at the ratification were close kin of the purchaser and therefore looked to his utility.” Community councils preferred to transfer land to married men, whom they explicitly regarded as more important citizens than widows: as the bailiff put it, who would care if such old animals should die of hunger?

Communities acted similarly with industrial enterprises. In 1668, for instance, the Wildberg community council dispossessed the widowed miller Ursula Haaf in favor of her son-in-law Hannß Jacob Bueb on the grounds that Ursula was “nearly 80 years old” (in fact she was sixty-seven) and owed tax arrears. But other local documents reveal not only that the community council exaggerated Ursula’s age to justify its action but that all local mills were facing economic difficulties, and dispossessing the widow did not solve the underlying problem. Quite the opposite: over the next three years, Hannß Jacob battered and starved his mother-in-law and children, abused the servants until they quit their jobs, operated the mill without diligence or expertise, defrauded the customers, failed to pay rents or taxes, and ultimately bankrupted the whole enterprise. As one customer trenchantly remarked, “Bueb simply doesn’t understand a thing about milling, and nevertheless wants to be a miller.” This case illustrates the basic flaw in community decision-making: what was needed to manage this complex craft was not male gender, physical strength, or youth but the ability to retain employees, satisfy customers, husband resources, and “understand . . . about milling.” These were all qualities a female might possess in greater abundance than a male, as shown by the many local mills operated for long periods by widows: in 1736, for instance, no fewer than 20 percent of all mills in the Württemberg district of Wildberg were being operated by widows.

The preference of community councils for transferring property from females to males, therefore, did not necessarily benefit either the individual agricultural or industrial enterprise or the wider economy. But it did benefit male citizens, who gained preferential access to basic economic inputs.

Communities affected the position of some of their most vulnerable female inhabitants in a fourth way, by regulating markets in another basic economic input, labor. Wage ceilings for servants and laborers were legislated in state ordinances but specified and enforced by community councils—that is, by social networks of male employers. The explicit purpose was to ensure that “no one shall entice or improperly tempt away another person’s servant, whether male or female, either in the towns or in the countryside, nor pay a higher wage than set down in this wage

kaufft, undt auch bezallt, darüber sie vermeldt, warumb mans ihrh nicht auch gasset, schulltheuß ußgeschlagen, waß es schaden sollt, wann schon ein solch alttz thier, hunger stirb.”

131 HSAS, A573 Bü. 129c, fol. 25r–v, May 14, 1664: “die sambltliche richtere so bej der vorttigung geweßen, dem käuffer nahe verwandt und also vff seinen nutzen gesehen.”


ordinance, on pain of jailing or a money fine.” It is sometimes argued that wage ordinances were widely evaded. But a 1631 list of actual servants’ wages in the district of Wildberg shows absolute wage levels and female-male wage ratios consistent with those laid down in the 1642 wage ordinance. The social capital of dense and multi-stranded relationships that characterized Württemberg communities helped ensure that employers who deviated from the low-wage norm were penalized. Thus, for instance, in 1619, informal rumors within the community ultimately gave rise to a case before the community court in which Hans Drescher demanded that Burckhard Schlaiffer’s wife be punished because she “enticed away a servant whom Drescher had had at his place for several years.” In the current state of research, we cannot say whether Württemberg communities capped female wages more strictly than male, but suggestive evidence is provided by the fact that the female-male wage ratio in these Württemberg communities lay around 0.3–0.4, considerably lower than the 0.6–0.7 common at the same period in England, where communities lacked cohesion, making it harder for male employers to collude. We cannot exclude the possibility that, as other studies have found, females who violated the official wage ceilings were reported and punished more frequently than males.

Württemberg communities also helped enforce the legal piece-rate ceilings the male weavers’ guilds imposed on female spinners. In the 1670s, for instance, Wildberg community officials assisted guild officers in confiscating yarn from village spinners working at higher than legal rates. As late as 1799, when the representative of a newly established cotton manufactory sought to recruit spinners in Wildberg at an attractive wage, the community council was only willing to let him hire paupers, on the grounds that “the persons here capable of [such work] can earn their livings from wool-spinning, which cannot be diminished without disadvantaging the worsted weavers’ guild.” Informal rumor mechanisms within the community were backed up by formal penalties imposed by the community court on those

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135 HSAS, A573 Bü. 5279 (1642); A573 Bü. 5597 (1631). For detailed discussion, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 111–15, 134–35, 287–93.

136 HSAS, A573 Bü. 15, fol. 436r, December 2, 1619: “ain ehehalten, so er drescher . . . etlich jarlang bey sich gehabt, ein ehehalten entfiehrt.” For additional examples, see HSAS, A573 Bü. 17, fol. 404r–v, September 3, 1640; PAW KKP, Vol. 3, p. 524, September 13, 1672.


139 HSAS, A573 Bü. 824 (1668–69), Zettel 9; Bü. 826 (1670–71), Zettel 15; Bü. 827 (1671–72), fol. 46, Zettel 1–2.


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who behaved “dishonorably” by paying their spinners “too much.”\textsuperscript{141} The social capital of dense and multi-stranded relationships that characterized Württemberg communities created formal and informal enforcement mechanisms deterring individual employers from deviating from the norm that one did not pay one’s employees above the guild or community wage ceiling.\textsuperscript{142} Community institutions sustained norms, conveyed information, and took collective action that benefited its members, who were mainly male employers, at the expense of non-members such as servants, laborers, and spinners, among whom women and the poor were disproportionately represented.

A fifth way in which communities affected women was by regulating access to common resources such as pastures, woods, and waters, which were central to agricultural production in early modern Württemberg.\textsuperscript{143} Women could not hold community office, sit on community councils, or speak at community assemblies.\textsuperscript{144} Unsurprisingly, such community institutions allocated common resources in ways that discriminated against females as a visible minority.

Unmarried women had no right to the commons, and even widows suffered discrimination by community councils. During the 1660s, for instance, Anna Barbara Haugin sought to continue operating the family farm in Gültlingen on the same basis as her deceased husband, who as a pastor had enjoyed freedom from corvée. Although this freedom was confirmed by a series of court decisions, the village council “forbade her meadow and water, excluded her from village pastures and the tithe, and also deprived her of two [common-land] cabbage fields.”\textsuperscript{145} Ignoring a legal decision that ordered the community to “let her prosper and enjoy the conveniences and everything that the citizens are given to enjoy in common, equally with any other inhabitant,” the village council targeted her in its regulation of agricultural output markets by failing to inform her of relevant legislation, manipulated community assemblies to deprive her of access to commons,\textsuperscript{146} and continued to deny her “the village privileges.”\textsuperscript{147}

Other widows also had to struggle for their share of common resources against male citizens who calculated that females’ visible differences (and lack of voice in communal institutions) meant their entitlements could be challenged. In 1708, for instance, a Pfondorf widow complained that “she was being denied her share of wild fruit on the pastures outside the village” through physical violence by several male citizens.\textsuperscript{149} In 1787, a young male citizen complained at the Wildberg

\textsuperscript{141} See, for instance, the case recorded in HSAS, A573 Bü. 15, fol. 618r, February 20, 1623.

\textsuperscript{142} For a suggestive characterization of the impact of similar forms of social capital in the American South during the Jim Crow era, see Steven N. Durlauf, “The Case ‘Against’ Social Capital,” \textit{Focus} 20 (1999): 1–6, here 2.


\textsuperscript{146} PAW KKP, Vol. 2, fol. 154v, October 20, 1665.

\textsuperscript{147} PAW KKP, Vol. 3, p. 300, February 18, 1670.


\textsuperscript{149} PAE KKP, Vol. 2, fol. 48r, December 21, 1708: “daß man sie nicht habe zu einem theil holtz bührhen habe kommen wollen lassen.”
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community assembly that “there are citizens and widows here who are permitted to be free from the citizens’ tax on account of their poverty . . . and nevertheless they enjoy citizens’ commons; as an example he instances Gottfried Niemann’s widow who has already been in service for a long time in Sulz and probably does not pay citizen’s tax.” He then revealed for his own personal interest: “he believes that the younger [male] citizens, who have all the burdens of citizens upon them and do not yet enjoy any common lands, would have a better right to the common lands than these persons.”150 Although state officials initially defended the widows’ rights, by 1793 the community assembly—at which women had no voice—decided that a widow (but not a widower) who remarried should lose any commons plot.151

The village elite of landowning males used their dominance of community institutions to obstruct any threat to their own privileged position—whether adopting agricultural innovations or opening access to females and outsiders.152 Until long after 1800, Württemberg’s agricultural sector was thoroughly regulated by a social network that sought above all things to maintain the status quo, excluded females from decisionmaking, and discriminated against them in its decisions. This limited agricultural growth as well as women’s ability to contribute to it.

Communities affected women in a sixth way, by using communal social capital to regulate consumption behavior. Sumptuary legislation was promulgated by the state but interpreted and enforced mainly by local communities.153 Communities appointed “censors” to monitor “the excessive sartorial display that has got out of hand,” and penalized individuals—most of them females—who purchased and wore proscribed garments.154 One surviving register records 110 sumptuary offenses fined over a twelve-month period (1713–1714) in Wildberg, a community of only 300 households.155 Of those fined, 91 percent were female, a pattern widely

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151 HSAS, A573 Bü. 100, fol. 15r, 1793.

152 For examples of how Württemberg community institutions blocked the adoption of new crops and agricultural techniques, see, for example, Ogilvie, State Corporatism, 66–69.


154 See, for example, PAW KKP, Vol. 2, fol. 18r, December 14, 1660: “daß überhand genommene . . . Klaid. Pracht.”

155 HSAS, A573 Bü. 6712, fol. 3r–6v, 1713–14.
observed in sumptuary enforcement throughout preindustrial Europe.\textsuperscript{156} The average fine inflicted was over 6 Kreuzer, nearly an average day’s earnings for a local proto-industrial weaver and six days’ wages for a maidservant.\textsuperscript{157} A fine of this size did not make it impossible to indulge in new forms of consumption, but it could not fail to deter the marginal consumer.\textsuperscript{158}

Community councils also imposed other penalties on female consumption, exhorting communal officeholders’ wives to refrain from sartorial display “in order to set a good example to others,”\textsuperscript{159} imposing public shaming on women who dressed above their station,\textsuperscript{160} inquiring severely into a wife’s alleged “disloyalty in the domestic economy” when she bought a new skirt without her (alcoholic) husband’s permission,\textsuperscript{161} and even denying poor relief to an old woman whose children “let themselves be observed in clothes above what is fitting.”\textsuperscript{162} Often, communities combined this concern about women’s excessive consumption with an equal concern about women’s excessive working practices, as in 1703, when the Ebhausen community council ordered widows to “refrain from the shameful misbehavior they have been engaging in, especially at spinning bees, and their uppishness in dress,”\textsuperscript{163} or in 1684, when it sentenced the Eigenbröterin Barbara Müller to three days and nights in jail because “she remained in the tavern past closing-time and spoke very impudently, saying that she could earn 3 Batzen in a quarter of an hour, so what did it matter if she consumed something? . . . Unlike this tankard, she didn’t have a lid.”\textsuperscript{164}

This combination of intense work and enhanced consumption by women, which so worried community councils, is strongly reminiscent of Jan De Vries’s “industrious revolution,” during which early modern individuals—particularly women—are thought to have shifted their time-allocation from leisure and household production into income-earning work, supplying the economy with more labor and using their earnings to consume more market goods, both of which encouraged economic growth.\textsuperscript{165} But in societies such as Württemberg, entrenched elites such as guild masters and community elders used their institutional powers as members

\textsuperscript{156} Hunt, Governance, 251–54.

\textsuperscript{157} Troeltsch, Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie, 221–25, calculates the average daily earnings of a worsted weaver in this region as 8 Kreuzer. On maidservants’ wages, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 111–14.

\textsuperscript{158} The impact of community-level sumptuary regulation in delaying and dampening changes in female consumption patterns in rural Württemberg to the end of the eighteenth century is confirmed by the gender-specific analyses of marriage inventories in Medick, Weben, 384–87, 398–406, 414, 427.

\textsuperscript{159} PAE KKP, Vol. 4, fol. 252r, January 18, 1684: “andern mit einem Exempel vorzugehen.”

\textsuperscript{160} PAW KKP, Vol. 4, fol. 220r–222v, June 7, 1682; PAW KKP, Vol. 5, fol. 100v–103v, April 19, 1691; PAE KKP, Vol. 2, fol. 46r, July 15, 1708.

\textsuperscript{161} PAE KKP, Vol. 5, pp. 218–19, January 30, 1767.

\textsuperscript{162} PAW KKP, Vol. 5, fol. 64v, February 4, 1687: “sich in Klaider über gebühr sehen laßen.”


\textsuperscript{164} PAE KKP, Vol. 1, fol. 16r, September 28, 1684: “daß sie . . . über Zeit im wirths haß gebilben vnrd damal. sich frecher weiß vernehmen laßen, sie Konn in einer Virtel stund 3 batz. verdienen, wann sie schon etwz verzhrehe”; also November 7, 1684: “sie hab auch kein deckhel, wie dz Kántlin.”

of recognized social networks not only to restrict women's production decisions, thereby affecting their incentives to intensify work, but also to limit the extent to which they could transform their production decisions into new consumption choices.\textsuperscript{166} Again, we must ask whether the social capital generated by Württemberg's communities might not have come at too high a price, in terms not only of women's welfare but also of limiting the wider economic growth that the "industrious revolution" brought to other eighteenth-century European economies.\textsuperscript{167}

But perhaps women, though excluded from the male-dominated social capital of community and guild, formed their own, female-dominated social capital that sustained women's well-being in an otherwise hostile institutional environment? Interestingly, there is an example of such network formation among women in the preindustrial Württemberg countryside—the spinning bee. Spinning bees were gatherings organized by women of all marital and household statuses to share lighting and heating costs, alleviate tedium, transmit information through gossip, and (for the unmarried) meet courting males in a neutral environment. But this example of female social capital is the exception that proves the rule, for spinning bees and the women who attended them were subject to continual harassment by male-dominated community institutions. Community councils, assemblies, and church courts issued repeated prohibitions against spinning bees and punished the women who attended them through sentencing them to money fines, imprisonment, and even ejection from the community.\textsuperscript{168} Communities' main formal concern was that spinning bees encouraged unregulated contact between unmarried women and men, leading to illegitimate pregnancies. But community institutions' objections to spinning bees ranged much more widely than this, as shown by their objection to married women participating in such gatherings, even with good economic justification. Thus in 1734, Michel Kuch's wife was fined by the Ebhausen community church court for attending a spinning bee organized by another married woman, despite her careful explanation that "[working] alone she does not earn her lighting costs."\textsuperscript{169}

One aspect of communities' wider dislike for spinning bees appears to have related precisely to their tendency to create a social capital of information transmission and collective (albeit informal) sanctions. In a typical complaint, a male citizen of Wildberg claimed in 1745 that these constant, irritating gatherings of female spinners "led to nothing but the passing of judgments on the authorities

\textsuperscript{166} On disapproval of "excessive" consumption by women in other societies of German-speaking Central Europe, see Wiesner, "Having," 197, 199, 201; Dürr, Mägde, 159, 182–83; Dürr, "Die Dienstbothe," 119. On the persistence of institutional restrictions on consumption in France until after circa 1750, see Fairchilks, "Fashion and Freedom," 420.


\textsuperscript{168} For a detailed survey of the ordinances against spinning bees in early modern Württemberg, see Hans Medick, "Village Spinning-Bees: Sexual Culture and Free Time among Rural Youths in Early Modern Germany," in Medick and David W. Sabean, eds., Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and History (Cambridge, 1984), 317–39; for a discussion of local-level enforcement, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, 284–85.

\textsuperscript{169} PAE KKP, Vol. 3, fol. 178r, February 28, 1734: "weil sie alleine das liecht nicht verdiene."
and other people."\textsuperscript{170} Community institutions expressed the concerns of their male members about the rival social network represented by the spinning bee in which women not only created their own norms—"the passing of judgments"—but shared this information and informally sanctioned "the authorities and other people"—that is, the respectable \emph{Ehrbarkeit} of male citizens who dominated community courts and community assemblies.

Female social networks existed, therefore, but had features that prevented them from generating significant social capital. For one thing, they lacked the admission criteria and hence the "closure" that, by intensifying the quality and reliability of the information sharing and third-party monitoring required to enforce cooperation, rendered the formally constituted male social networks so formidable.\textsuperscript{171} For another, they were networks of the powerless, with no effective defense against the cohesive guilds and communities of powerful males, whose social capital was so efficiently mobilized against them. As a result, male social networks were largely successful in manipulating their own social capital so as to turn female networks into informal, illegal, and irregular gatherings whose potential to generate and benefit from social capital was stifled.

\textbf{Social capital has important implications for thinking about gender—but gender has even more important implications for thinking about social capital. As this article has sought to demonstrate, social capital provides a conceptual framework useful for identifying and analyzing the precise characteristics of those social institutions that facilitate gender discrimination. Patriarchal attitudes were universal in preindustrial Europe, but they were put into effect to a widely varying extent in different European societies. They could be enforced most effectively where there were social institutions manifesting "closure" and "multiplex relations"—that is, social networks such as strong and closely knit guilds and communities. Such institutions created the "social capital" that enabled individual men to coordinate their actions to create and disseminate shared norms about female behavior, convey information efficiently about violations of these norms, and organize collective action to impose sanctions on those who deviated from these norms. Societies with strong social networks, such as Württemberg, were much better able to impose and enforce norms regulating the training, work, marriage, residence, and consumption behavior of females than was the case, for instance, in the Low Countries, England, France, Scotland, or even (increasingly) Prussia in the same period.\textsuperscript{172} While patriarchal norms meant that women faced very serious restrictions in all preindustrial European societies, social capital made it easier to enforce these norms in societies with strong and closely knit guilds and communities.}

But if social capital is helpful in thinking about gender, gender is even more

\textsuperscript{170} HSAS, A573 Bü. 95, fol. 14r, May 10, 1745: "nichts als ausrichten der Obrigkeit und anderer leitüe ausgeübet werde." For a detailed discussion of the regulation of spinning bees, see Medick, "Village Spinning Bees" (on the legislative framework); and Ogilvie, \emph{Bitter Living}, 29, 166, 184–86, 208, 241, 313 (on local-level realities).

\textsuperscript{171} For the original insight, see Coleman, "Social Capital," S104–S110; for a more rigorous development, see Sobel, "Can We Trust," esp. 151.

\textsuperscript{172} For a comparative perspective, see Ogilvie, \emph{Bitter Living}, 344–52.
helpful in thinking about social capital. As theoretical concepts, social capital and social networks have hitherto been warmly embraced by social scientists, who regard them as being uniformly beneficial, not just for network members but for the whole society. But empirical and theoretical considerations such as those presented in this article suggest that social capital should be considered in a cooler and more skeptical light.

The guilds and local communities of rural Württemberg did function as social networks. They satisfied the political scientists' criteria of "closure" and "multiplex relationships" required for the effective creation of social capital, and they used this social capital to sustain norms, share information, punish deviants, and organize collective action. But the norms they enforced, the information they shared, the forms of deviancy they punished, and the collective action they organized were deeply implicated in the exclusion of women from many sectors of the preindustrial economy and the exploitation of women in many others. Guilds excluded girls from vocational training, prevented married women and widows from pursuing different occupations from their husbands, forbade unmarried women to do many guided tasks altogether, limited widows' ability to carry on the family workshop, and forced thousands of spinners and seamstresses to work at starvation wages. Communities denied females full citizenship, ejected unmarried women when male citizens complained, enforced a form of gender tutelage that prevented women from pursuing their own utility, discriminated against widows in property markets, forced maidservants and female laborers to work at wage rates less than one-third that of males and below their market level, restricted widows' entitlements to common resources, and penalized women's consumption choices. In short, these social networks used their social capital to protect the norms and privileges of their own male membership, but by so doing reduced many women's well-being and limited their contribution to the wider economy.

How can the social networks of preindustrial Germany help us think more clearly about social capital now? These historical findings suggest three important lines of inquiry.

First, they suggest that early theorists such as James Coleman were right to argue that effectiveness in generating social capital may be a positive function of a network's "closure," the care with which it defines membership. Only closure can create the dense network of interactions among the same people, enabling coherent formulation of collective norms, universal sharing of information, rapid detection of violators, and effective imposition of sanctions. But closure has its costs. Gender, ethnicity, religion, and race offer visible criteria for achieving network closure, and empirically social networks have often excluded females as well as members of other easily identifiable groups such as Jews or people of different skin colors. See, for instance, the original contributions by Coleman, "Social Capital"; and Putnam, Leonardo, and Nanetti, Making Democracy Work; and, from a burgeoning recent literature, the almost uniformly optimistic assessments of social networks by the essays in Dasgupta and Serageldin, Social Capital.


More recently, social capital theorists such as Robert Putnam have claimed that this problem can be solved by replacing the "bonding" social capital created by closure with so-called "bridging" social capital, which forms ties with other groups. But this does not deal with the problem that—as comparisons between male and female social networks in preindustrial Germany strongly suggest—network closure may be essential for effectively formulating norms, conveying information, detecting deviants, and undertaking collective action. That is, it may be theoretically inevitable as well as empirically widespread for strong social capital to be associated with strong gender and ethnic discrimination. If so, the claim that all members of society can gain from social capital is untenable.

Second, the historical findings for preindustrial Europe suggest that social networks not only exclude outsiders but use their social capital to reap benefits at the expense of outsiders. This article has illustrated how a social capital of shared norms, efficient information transmission, and collective sanctions was manipulated to benefit male guild masters and male community citizens at the expense of women. It also harmed other outsiders, such as Jews, foreigners, bastards, non-Lutherans, and members of "dishonorable" occupations. These tactics were not merely an incidental expression of patriarchal social attitudes but a deliberate and essential component of the strategy pursued by social networks to sustain and defend their own norms and privileges. That is, historical findings suggest that the benefits of social capital are commonly secured at the expense of network outsiders, who are often particularly vulnerable members of society. A group with members necessarily implies the existence of non-members, and it is not clear what—if anything—can encourage social capital to exist while preventing it from being used by insiders against outsiders.

Third, history suggests that social capital does not always benefit society as a whole. The social capital created by preindustrial German guilds and communities protected monopolists from competition, prevented occupational and geographical mobility, reduced human capital investment, helped employers exploit workers, encouraged social exclusion, and stifled innovation in production and consumption. One might argue that the social networks of preindustrial Württemberg were exceptional, "bad" social networks as opposed to the many "good" social networks described by political scientists in such glowing terms. But research from a vast array of other preindustrial European societies reveals that their guilds and local communities behaved in very similar ways, and that where they did not—as in France, the Netherlands, England, or Scotland—it was because their strength and cohesion were breaking down. Many modern social networks—Mafias, cartels,
lobbying organizations, political parties, even religious clubs—also generate social capital that redistributes resources to their members rather than increasing the welfare of society as a whole. The historical findings suggest that a network may as easily coordinate on bad norms as good norms. Furthermore, as James Coleman himself acknowledged, "effective norms in an area can reduce innovativeness in an area, not only deviant actions that harm others but also deviant actions that can benefit everyone." The historical findings on gender presented in this article have important implications for how social scientists think about social capital. They illustrate the significance of network "closure," the harm social capital can inflict on network outsiders, and the questionable nature of claims that social capital benefits the wider society rather than special-interest groups that are already powerful. When we ask which institutional framework is best—whether for women or for the economy more widely—history suggests that we scrutinize social networks and social capital with caution.

different early modern European societies, and their treatment of women, see Ogilvie, Bitter Living, chap. 7.

178 This possibility is acknowledged but unfortunately not pursued in Fukuyama, Trust, esp. 156–59; and Putnam, Bowling Alone, 350–63. For a prescient discussion of these problems with social capital, long before the term became fashionable, see Mancur Olson, The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities (New Haven, Conn., 1982), esp. 125, where he explicitly refers to the abuses practiced by guilds.


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