

ABSTRACT

This study illustrates how GIS technology can help to show how social capital is generated and why firing ranges, specifically, can help to generate social capital. The term social capital was defined by Hanifan (1916) as the tangible assets most significant in daily life, such as goodwill, fellowship, and sympathy. This study builds upon previous social capital research by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, Bettertogether.org, and Robert Putnam. It uses GIS mapping and analysis tools to chart the spatial relationships between firing ranges and traditional social capital generating sources in the Greater Houston, Texas area. A survey modeled after the World Bank's Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT) and Harvard's Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) was distributed to five firing ranges in Houston, Texas and the results of the survey were used to map the locations of firing ranges and patrons and to show firing ranges help to create social capital in the same manner sporting venues, religious, and community institutions do. This study illustrates why firing ranges are analogous to known social capital generators in their ability to create social capital, assesses the need to employ GIS technology in continued research on the social capital landscape created by non-traditional sources such as firing ranges in America, and marks an opportunity to revisit previous research on social capital from traditional sources and organizations.