Preface

Since the mid-1990s, theoretical and empirical research on how social capital affects well-being has blossomed in the fields of economic development, and environmental and natural resource economics. Based on noted theoretical and empirical work in other social sciences, this concept is starting to work its way into the economist’s toolkit.

In April 2000, participants in the 21st Annual Conference on Economics Issues at Middlebury College considered the implications of social capital research for the teaching and practice of development economics. Conference participants, drawn from a diverse range of academic and policy viewpoints, shared new research and field experiences as they related to this concept.

The chapters of this volume originated with this conference. Putting a conference together and making it work is no easy task. We would like to acknowledge the wonderful help that we received from Melissa Dalais in taking care of all the details – big and small.

The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation supported the conference. The Foundation has helped support, not only this annual conference, but also a series of lectures organized by the Department of Economics at Middlebury College: this has helped our economics faculty and students to have much more interaction with colleagues from the wider economic world than is typically possible at most undergraduate institutions. We are extremely grateful to the Foundation for making this possible and would like to thank the president, Julie Kidd, and the holder of the Christian A. Johnson professorship here at Middlebury College, David Colander.

David, with his vast experience in organizing conferences and producing excellent volumes from those proceedings, was also helpful with this volume, with his sage and timely advice. A number of colleagues who took part in the conference helped shape many of the chapters in this volume with their insightful comments. They include Marc Garcelon, Meghan McGuinness, Ellen Oxfeld, Prasanta Pattanaik, Louis Putterman, Umar Serajuddin, Iffath Sharif and Phanindra Wunnava. We would also like to thank Edward Elgar for taking on the project, and, in particular, Francine O’Sullivan, Alexandra Minton, Jennifer Chilton and Caroline Cornish for their wonderful assistance in seeing the project through from start to completion.

We recognized early on that this volume could not simply be a reprinting of the conference presentations, no matter how well the conference went off.
The papers had to fit into a larger theme. This required much rewriting and reworking of the chapters on the part of the authors and the editors. We thank the authors for being prompt in responding to our suggestions. Helen Raiff, with her wonderful eye for detail, served as an excellent editor of all the chapters. Steffy Rompas ably assisted us by cross-checking references and formatting the manuscript.

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