

Lesson Plan: Civil Society

I. Review

II. Discussion of civil society in America today

III. Logistics

a. the state

b. next week's readings

REVIEW

What are civil society organizations? Are you personally involved in any civil society organizations? Your parents?

realm of organized citizen activity that is autonomous from the state: unions, girl scouts, NRA, AARP, KKK, bird watching

What are different types of structures they can have?

cross cutting or not

What is social capital and what is its relationship to civil society?

defined as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement that can facilitate coordinated action." Generated and reinforced by participation in civic organizations.

What outcomes do we expect them to affect? Brief summary of Varshney and Putnam's arguments, ¶

violence

democracy

DISCUSSION

3) Consider Putnam's argument in "Bowling Alone." Do you find it convincing? Is America in the midst of an inexorable decline? Are there important factors he is missing?

What about the role of technology?

From the states' week, you should be able to:

-discuss the differences between the scope and strength of the state
-discuss consequences of state weakness or strength (could be helpful to think about this in connection with our discussion on state-led developments)

-discuss causes of state weakness and strength - know the arguments for different regions of the world, in particular, Europe, Africa, Latin America and East Asia

Next week:

read Alesina & Glaeser first, Bellin is most import of Iraq readings

Bowling Alone

The Collapse and Revival of American Community



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Social Capital Primer

Social Capital Primer

The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all "social networks" [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other ["norms of reciprocity"].

How does social capital work?

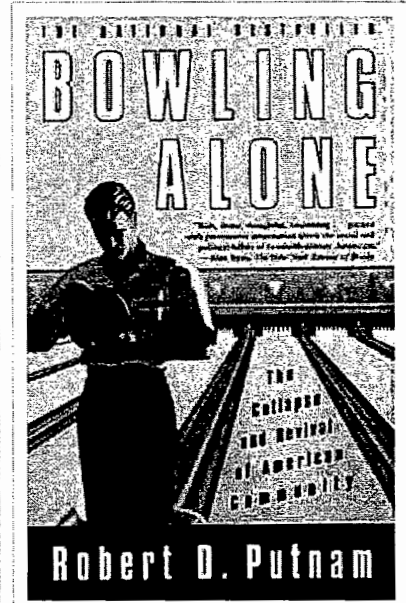
The term social capital emphasizes not just warm and cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected and – at least sometimes – for bystanders as well.

Social capital works through multiple channels:

- Information flows (e.g. learning about jobs, learning about candidates running for office, exchanging ideas at college, etc.) depend on social capital.
- Norms of reciprocity (mutual aid) rely on social networks. Bonding networks that connect folks who are similar sustain particularized (in-group) reciprocity. Bridging networks that connect individuals who are diverse sustain generalized reciprocity.
- Collective action depends upon social networks (e.g., the role that the black church played in the Civil Rights movement) although collective action also can foster new networks.
- Broader identities and solidarity are encouraged by social networks that help translate an "I" mentality into a "we" mentality.

What are some examples of social capital?

When a group of neighbors informally keep an eye on one another's homes, that's social capital in action. When a tightly knit community of Hassidic Jews trade diamonds without having to test each gem for purity, that's social capital in action. Barn-raising on the frontier was social capital in action, and so too are e-mail exchanges among members of a cancer support group. Social capital can be found in friendship networks, neighborhoods, churches, schools, bridge clubs, civic associations, and even bars. The motto in Cheers "where everybody knows your name" captures one important aspect of social capital.



FACTOIDS...

Joining and participating in one group cuts in half your odds of dying next year.

Every ten minutes of commuting reduces all forms of social capital by 10%

Watching commercial entertainment TV is the only leisure activity where doing more of it is associated with lower social capital.

Declining Social Capital: Trends over the last 25 years

Attending Club Meetings
58% drop

Family dinners
43% drop

Having friends over
35% drop

Having friends over
35% drop

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