

## Organized Social Capital

The decrease of America's organized social capital described in Robert Putnam's article, "Bowling Alone" is an incorrect depiction of today's society. Social capital has not decreased; society has redefined what social capital means. An increase in social capital opportunities has emerged because the limitations of bureaucracy and authority have decreased, the technological environment has pushed the social agenda, and today's educational climate has rotated the focus of connections.

Bureaucracy is defined as an organization in which activities are divided into roles which are defined by rules and procedures and arranged in a hierarchy of power (Alexander et. al. 2012:545). This type of group requires a sense of authority and strict organization in the way it operates. This authority and bureaucracy is not as stringent as it used to be in group organizations. Deloitte Corporation researched the organizational design of U.S. businesses in their 2016 Global Human Capital Trends and concluded "there is a new mode of organization—a network of teams" (McDowell et. al. 2016). Authority and coercion used to be what drove the agenda for organized social capital because of the necessary effects that it had on society. Today, there is less authority and hierarchal roles in organizations – especially those that are of social focus. Putnam describes how people in today's society are involving themselves in "small groups" where participation, attendance, and criticism are not necessary (1995:72). I would disagree with his conclusion that this is a negative countertrend. The transition of organizations to a focus of improvements of one's personal growth through social interactions is a step past the traditional organization. It still focuses on the idea that connections are made through organizations, but it also takes it a step further towards the construction community or self-growth. The authority in bureaucracy can discourage people from joining organizations.

McDowell claimed that “Smaller organizational units tap into the human strengths of communication: People simply know each other better.” (2016). Today’s society is moving toward organizations of communal authority, instead of a dictator leadership hierarchical structure. Because of the collective responsibility, people are enabled to gain an even stronger social capital.

Robert Putnam describes the loss of social capital due to many different reasons. One of these reasons is the increase in technology and leisure (1995:75). He claims people to feel like they can meet less, communicate more, and yet still maintain their social capital connections (1995:75). I believe this to be possible. Millennial interests and trends such as social media and technology innovations has allowed for people to connect more than they ever have before. For example, LinkedIn allows people to connect with those they may not have been able to otherwise; which grows networks (Morris 2014). I do believe that there is undoubtedly a difference between knowing someone personally through an organization, and knowing someone only through activities shared on their Facebook page, but this is still a form of social capital. With social media and unlimited information at our fingertips, we are able to find communal events, social organizations, even business connections. Impressive technological advances have allowed for abundant opportunities of social capital to now be accessible to a wider society. Big data is also playing a large role in this. Technology has allowed companies and organizations to link our interests, investments and activities so we may be involved in other things in society. This is enabling consumers to find even more possibilities for connections. Social capital is not being lost because of technology, it is being changed in the way we find opportunities for it.

Ray Marshall and Marc Tucker discuss the rise in education and its implications in their article “Thinking for a Living” (1992:13). There has been a growing increase over the past 100

years in the expectations for education in society. Along with this, are increases in educational responsibility and consequently an increase in educational competitiveness (Marshall et. al. 1992:21). If education growth in the US is continuing as Marshall's theory has discussed, there may be a directional change in the types of organizations people—especially students—are involved in. I believe in today's society (as education continues to rise); students are using organizations to get ahead in their educations. "Developing and maintaining relationships with others for the purpose of mutual benefit can help individuals search for and secure employment opportunities, gain access to needed information or resources—especially on short notice—and obtain guidance, sponsorship and social support" (Janasz, et. al.:2007:1). The social capital students are creating for themselves is in the hopes that it will increase their employability for the future. Organizations such as tutor groups, business clubs, and volunteering is focused on resume-building instead of only recreation. Though this is a negative aspect surrounding the over-competitive educational system, it still means students are involving themselves in organizations to increase their social capital. These students turn into adults and working professionals who also enroll in professional, career-building organizations. There may be a decrease in certain recreational organization attendance, but the professional world is taking on a new form of social capital to progress career-growth.

According to Putnam, active civic engagement is a part of our society that is necessary to success because of the strengths and connectivity it brings to communities (1995:66). Social capital is increasing; against the conclusions that Putnam and Collins have drawn about the issue. The decrease of bureaucracy in organizations, the increase of technological innovations, and the climate change of competitive education has all lead to a different definition of modern day social capital. This connectivity is growing, and it is a positive change to society.

## References

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