Recently, American social scientists of a neo-focuseneration bent have unearthed a wide range of surprising evidence that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions (and not only political ones) depends more on the intellectual and moral associations in America.

In general and very limited, numerous large and very minute "nothing in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America." But in most cases, the evidence is overwhelming and undeniable. Otherwise, the question remains: Are there any community and individual associations that would be considered by a democratic people as having made any contribution to American life?

Ever since the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America, the United States has been a model for other democracies around the world. Yet, despite its influence, the question of what makes America unique has remained largely unexplored. The current debate about the future of American democracy is not just about the country's past and present, but also about its potential future. How can we ensure that America remains a model for democracy in the world?

Robert Putnam

Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital

Endowment for Democracy

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Robert Putnam - Bowling Alone - Journal of Democracy 6:1
Whatever Happened to Civic Engagement?

Whatever happened to civic engagement? The term, so often used in discussions of democratic participation and social capital, has become somewhat of a mantra in recent years. But what does it mean? How has it evolved, and what impact has it had on society? This article explores the concept of civic engagement and its role in modern democracies.

Civic engagement refers to the active participation of citizens in the political and social life of a community. It involves the exercise of rights, the exercise of responsibilities, and the active involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes of their communities. Civic engagement can take many forms, including voting, volunteering, joining community groups, and participating in local government meetings.

The importance of civic engagement has been recognized by scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike. It is seen as a key factor in fostering a healthy democracy, promoting social cohesion, and improving the well-being of citizens. However, the decline of civic engagement in recent years has raised concerns about the health of democratic institutions and the well-being of citizens.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the study of civic engagement. This has been driven by a growing recognition of the importance of civic engagement for the health of democracy and the well-being of citizens. Researchers have explored the determinants of civic engagement, the benefits of civic engagement, and the challenges facing civic engagement in the modern world.

The benefits of civic engagement are numerous. It helps to ensure that government is responsive to the needs of citizens, promotes social cohesion, and fosters a sense of community. It also helps to create a more informed and engaged citizenry, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

However, the challenges facing civic engagement are significant. In many countries, there is a decline in civic engagement, with fewer people participating in political processes and community activities. This decline is a concern for policymakers, who see it as a threat to the health of democracy.

The future of civic engagement is uncertain. While there are signs of hope, such as the increased participation in local government meetings and community activities, there is also a need for continued efforts to promote civic engagement. This includes efforts to educate citizens about the importance of civic engagement, to provide opportunities for citizens to participate in political and social processes, and to ensure that government is responsive to the needs of citizens.

In conclusion, civic engagement is a key factor in fostering a healthy democracy and promoting the well-being of citizens. While there are challenges facing civic engagement, there are also opportunities for continued efforts to promote civic engagement. It is essential that we work together to ensure that citizens are engaged in the political and social life of their communities, and that government is responsive to the needs of citizens.
How have these complex cross-currents played out over the past three or four decades in terms of Americans' engagement with organized religion? The general pattern is clear. The 1960s witnessed a significant drop in reported weekly churchgoing—from roughly 48 percent in 1960 to 28 percent in 1975—only to see a modest increase in the last 20 years. It would seem, then, that not participation in church-related groups has declined modestly (by perhaps as much as a third) since the 1980s.

Religious affiliation is by far the most common association among Americans. Indeed, the data from the General Social Survey show an astonishingly high number of Americans (over 80 percent) claiming to be affiliated with a church or other religious organization. In fact, the data from the General Social Survey show that religious affiliation is one of the few variables that are consistently associated with political participation across different countries. For example, in a study of 33 countries, religious affiliation was found to be significantly correlated with political participation (Aral et al. 2012). This suggests that religion may play a role in shaping political behavior, even in secular societies where religious institutions are not as powerful as they are in more traditional societies.

Our survey of organizational membership among Americans over the past three decades suggests that these trends are likely to continue. The proportion of Americans who belong to church-related groups has declined modestly since the 1980s. This decline may be due to a variety of factors, including the increasing secularization of American society, the decline of traditional religious institutions, and the rise of new forms of political mobilization that are less dependent on religious institutions. Nonetheless, the data show that religious affiliation remains an important predictor of political participation, even in a context where the role of religion in politics has become more complex.
These new mass-membership organizations are a serious counterpoint to the traditional forms of political engagement. Standing in the forefront of the trend toward membership-based political action are the new labor unions and community-based organizations. These organizations are not only growing in number but also in size, with many now reaching into the millions of members. They are challenging the traditional political parties and are becoming increasingly influential in shaping public policy. The rise of these new organizations is a significant development in the political landscape, and they are likely to have a major impact on the future of American politics.
The growth of voluntary organizations represents one potential (but probably not real) component of "social capital." A third potential component is much more relevant: an assessment of social capital and social capital.

Secondary associations could be another fundamental component. To identify trends in the size of the nonprofit sector with trends in social secondary associations, organizations that are not called "community associations" most commonly are called "local groups" or "neighborhood associations." The so-called "social capital" includes everything the nonprofit sector doesn't measure. The size of communities reflects the population of nonprofit organizations, reflecting more national or local government policies. A growing number of voluntary (or "non-profit," in some cases) organizations are considered to be social capital. The size of the nonprofit sector, the size of the voluntary sector, and the size of the social capital sector all reflect the relative size of voluntary organizations, whether they are "formal" or "informal."

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Why Is U.S. Social Capital Eroding?

1. Across the 25 countries in this survey, social trust and civic engagement are strongly correlated. The greater the density of associational memberships in a society, the more lasting are the bonds among individuals. High social capital is also apparent in educational systems that most people believe are effective. The proportion of Americans saying they trust their neighbors fell by more than a third between 1970 and 1990, when 25 percent chose that alternative, and 1993, when only 7 percent did. The same trend is apparent in educational groups. Indeed, because social capital is hard to measure, it is often difficult to explain our loss of trust, the proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted in social exchanges.

2. The close correlation between social trust and associational membership is not just a matter of opinion. The overall drop in social trust is evenly more apparent in educational systems and civic engagement in education than in other domains. When asked to rate the schools in their communities, 72 percent of Americans say that the schools are doing a good job in 1974, but only 64 percent of the same group say that the schools are doing a good job in 1990. The same is true of civic engagement. The proportion of Americans who volunteer to help neighbors has fallen by more than a third between 1970 and 1990, when 25 percent chose that alternative, and 1993, when only 7 percent did. The proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted in social exchanges.

3. The trends of the past quarter-century, however, have not affected the United States. America's social capital has been undermined to a greater extent than in other countries, and the U.S. social capital deficit has been especially severe in certain states, where social capital is significantly lower than in the nation as a whole.

4. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that the United States, like other countries, has experienced a decline in social trust and civic engagement.
The post-relocation of a social-science scholar is to do more research. Nevertheless, I cannot...
The concept of "civil society" has played a central role in the recent global debate about the future of democratic governance and its capacity to address the pressing challenges of our time. The ability of democratic institutions to effectively respond to these challenges depends on the active participation of civil society actors, including non-governmental organizations, media, and citizens. In this context, the role of universities and academic institutions becomes crucial, as they provide a space for critical engagement with the issues at hand and contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding that can inform public policy and social action.

First, universities can contribute to democratic governance by fostering an environment where ideas can be freely exchanged and critical thinking is encouraged. This is achieved through the promotion of intellectual freedom, the encouragement of diverse perspectives, and the establishment of mechanisms for accountability and transparency. In this way, universities can help to ensure that democratic institutions remain responsive and representative of the interests of all segments of society.

Second, universities can play a role in strengthening social cohesion and promoting social capital. By providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration, they can help to bridge divides and promote mutual understanding. This is especially important in contexts where social inequalities are pronounced and where trust and cooperation are essential for the functioning of democratic institutions.

Finally, universities can contribute to the development of a civic culture by engaging with the broader community and fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This involves promoting civic education, encouraging participation in community activities, and cultivating a culture of critical thinking and social engagement. Through these efforts, universities can help to build a more resilient and democratic society, capable of overcoming the challenges of the future.
and 1960s. The Great Depression was a time of profound economic and social turmoil. The Great Depression, followed by World War II, led to the establishment of the United Nations and the modern international economic order. The post-war period saw significant economic growth and innovation, which continues to shape the world today.

From 1945 to 1970, the United States emerged as a superpower, with a strong and expanding economy. This period was marked by the Cold War, which saw the United States and its allies confront the Soviet Union and its allies. The United States played a leading role in shaping the international order, and its influence was felt in every corner of the world.

5. Any simplistically nationalistic interpretation of the collapse of American hegemony would need to confront the fact that the Great Depression was a time of profound economic and social turmoil, which led to the establishment of the United Nations and the modern international economic order. The post-war period saw significant economic growth and innovation, which continues to shape the world today.

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Notes

1. Aristotelian, Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 1839-1840.

Commentary and Writings on Related Topics:

- Development of American Democracy
- Democracy, Education, and the Economy

Robert Putnam - Bowling Alone: Journal of Democracy 6:1


Hypotheses and Some Empirical Tests” (unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan, 1994).

If I am grateful to Ronald Inglehart, who directs his unique cross-national project for sharing these

9. Ibid., 3-6.


11. See also Reisman, "Partners in Public Service: The Scope and Theory of Government.