

Bowling Alone Cornell Notes - Day 1

Key Points/Questions	Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do paragraphs 1-8 suggest about the role civic engagement plays in communities? 2. What is social capital and why does it matter within a society? 3. Why is the author choosing to focus his study on America? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Civic engagement directly connects to the “quality of public life and performance of social institutions.” Strong civic engagement within a community creates a stronger community. Communities with strong civic engagement tend to have more success when dealing with community problems such as education, poverty, unemployment, crime, and drug abuse. The quality of government in communities with strong civil engagement also seems to be higher than those communities with less civic engagement. 2. According to the text, social capital are “the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” Unlike physical and human capital that focus on the individual people in the community, social capital represents the aspects of a community that allow people to connect with other members to form bonds and social trust. Social capital is important within a community because it creates an easier life for its inhabitants. Communities filled with people who work together toward a common goal and who trust other members functions more effectively than communities that lack social capital. 3. The author chooses to focus on America because America usually sets the trends for “social modernization” (“harbingers of social modernization”). Studying America can offer insight to world-wide trends for modern societies. Also, America has, since its inception, been a country with high civic engagement. However, in recent years, civic engagement in America has declined.
Summarize Putnam’s findings on civic engagement and its effects on communities.	
<p>Putnam has researched the idea of civic engagement. Civic engagement is another term for community involvement in associations that share a common goal, such as religious, service, political, work-related, or entertainment-based groups of people. Putnam has discovered that communities with high levels of civic engagement tend to have more successful communities. These benefits include increased levels of success when dealing with community problems such as poverty, unemployment, education, crime, and health. He has also found that the government of communities that are civically engaged tend to function more effectively and have higher levels of participation. Putnam notes that civic engagement in American communities is dwindling.</p>	

Bowling Alone Cornell Notes - Day 2

Key Points/Questions	Notes
<p>4. Examine the first subtitle, "Whatever Happened to Civic Engagement?" What will the author establish in this section?</p> <p>5. What are the forms of civic engagement that Putnam focuses on in this section?</p> <p>6. What is the trend with all forms of civic engagement discussed in this section? How does Putnam prove this trend?</p> <p>7. What is the purpose of focusing on bowling teams in the last paragraph of this section? How does it contrast the other forms of civic engagement, but also support the author's purpose of this section?</p>	<p>4. The first subtitle suggests that civic engagement has "gone" somewhere and that participation in civic organizations is not as high as it once was. The author will use this section to establish that there is indeed an issue with civic engagement in American communities.</p> <p>5. Putnam focuses on several different forms of civic engagement: political participation through voting or attending public forums or rallies; religious group participation; work-related groups such as labor unions; . school-related groups such as the PTA ; volunteer groups such as the Red Cross; fraternal organizations such as the Shriners, Jaycees, Lions, or Masons; and bowling leagues.</p> <p>6. The trend with all forms of civic engagement discussed in this section is that participation is down from what it was in the 1960's. He proves this trend by comparing percentages of participation between the 1960's and the 1990's (the decade the article was published).</p> <p>7. The purpose of focusing on bowling teams in the last paragraph is to show that this lack of participation even extends to groups based purely on recreation. Unlike political or religious organizations, bowling leagues seem more mundane. However, the trend in data extends to this "whimsical" type of organization too. Putnam also uses bowling leagues to point out that even though more people bowl today than ever before, they are choosing to do so without joining an organization of other community members. This information helps prove his point that people are less likely to join community groups.</p>
<p>Summarize Putnam's findings on civic engagement and its effects on communities.</p> <p>Putnam analyzes several forms of civic engagement to prove that Americans are less likely to engage in civic organizations now than they were in the 4 previous decades. He examines political, religious, school, work, and service groups to show how participation numbers decrease each year. According to the introduction section, this would suggest that the communities themselves are suffering because of the lack of involvement in these types of organizations.</p>	

Bowling Alone Cornell Notes - Day 3

Key Points/Questions	Notes
<p>8. What is a “tertiary association” and why does it not create the social capital that a “secondary association” creates?</p> <p>9. Putnam quotes Wuthnow who states that within small support groups, “the social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest of obligations.” How does this support Putnam’s claim about the importance of traditional forms of civic engagement?</p> <p>10. What is social trust and how does it related to involvement in associations?</p>	<p>8. A “tertiary association” is an organization that ties members to “common symbols, common leaders, and perhaps common ideals, but not to one another.” This would include organizations like the Sierra Club that have many members, but whose members do not interact with one another. Because of this lack of interaction, the social capital is not created. Social capital is created through interconnectedness amongst community members and that does not occur with tertiary associations.</p> <p>9. Putnam claims that social obligation through civic engagement creates social capital and, thus, a stronger community. According to the article, small groups like a support group are focused primarily on the individual and not on the larger group. Taking away this obligation to the larger group prevents the development of the trust and reciprocity that becomes social capital.</p> <p>Social trust is the tendency for individuals to trust others. Generally, people who participate in associations have higher levels of social trust than those who do not. This is relevant to Putnam’s argument because social trust helps create more social capital resulting in stronger community bonds.</p>
Summarize Putnam’s findings on civic engagement and its effects on communities.	
<p>Putnam turns to several trends in organizations in America to see if civic engagement is being replaced by an equally powerful element in communities. He first examines large organizations such as the Sierra Club or the AARP. Though many people are involved in these groups, these groups don’t require the kind of group interaction that is needed to foster obligations and, therefore, social capital. He argues that these members may share something in common, but because they are not meeting together, it does not create the same community environment that traditional civic groups create. Upward trends in nonprofit organizations such as Oxfam also do not offer the same community benefits because of their own lack of social interaction between group members. Finally, Putnam notes that participation in support groups (i.e. Alcoholics Anonymous) is up, but that, again, these support groups do not take the place of traditional civic organizations because they tend to focus on the individual’s improvement rather than a collective group goal. Putnam ends this section by noting that increases in educational levels usually lead to higher civic engagement. However, in modern American trends, education is on</p>	

the rise, but civic engagement is in a decline. This suggests that despite more people being statistically likely to be engaged civically, fewer people are actually participating in their commu

The next section focuses on social trust. According to Putnam, people are less likely to trust each other now than they were in decades past. This lack of trust could be contributing to lack of civic engagement.

Bowling Alone Cornell Notes - Day 4

Key Points/Questions	Notes
<p>11. What are some possible reasons that civic engagement is in decline?</p>	<p>Putnam highlights several trends that could be at fault for the decline of civic engagement. They are the entrance of women into the workforce; tendencies for people to move; demographic transformations such as fewer marriages and more divorces; and the introduction of technological forms of entertainment, i.e. the television.</p>
<p>Summarize Putnam's findings on civic engagement and its effects on communities.</p>	
<p>Putnam also recognizes changes in the American way of life such as women in the work force, lack of stability in homeownership, trends in family life (marriages, divorce, etc.), and the increase in technological forms of leisure. He suggests that these changes could have had an impact on civic engagement.</p>	

Bowling Alone Cornell Notes - Day 4

Key Points/Questions	Notes
<p>12. What are areas involving civic engagement and social capital that require more research?</p> <p>13. What is the author's purpose for this essay regarding the issue of civic engagement?</p> <p>14. Look closely at the structure of this essay, paying attention to the subtitles. How does Putnam's organizational structure help to prove his argument?</p>	<p>Researchers need to investigate the following: the specific types of organizations that generate the most social capital, the impact of electronic networks on social capital, the benefits versus the drawbacks of organizations, and how public policy influences the creation and sustainability of civic organizations.</p> <p>The author's purpose for this essay was to emphasize the positive effects that civic engagement can have on a community. He also wanted to prove that there is a decline in civic engagement and he suggested that this decline could have negative effects on communities. All of this information worked together to support the idea that more focus should be placed on social engagement and its role in the success of communities.</p> <p>Putnam's argument is that civic engagement is vital to a community and that America must find ways to reestablish social capital within its communities. In this essay, Putnam first establishes the benefits of civic engagement in the first section of this essay. He provides information that suggests that civic engagement is something that communities should strive for in order to be successful. He then goes on to reveal that participation in these types of organizations is declining. Given what he has previously proven in the essay, this would suggest that communities are in danger. He ends the paper with possible reasons for the decline and possible avenues for research that would seek to end this problem. Therefore, by presenting the information in this order, Putnam has convinced his audience that there needs to be a change and has given them suggestions for how this change should take place.</p>
Summarize Putnam's findings on civic engagement and its effects on communities	
<p>Putnam recognizes the need for more research on civic engagement. He points out that sociologists must discover which types of organizations produce the most social capital so that those types of organizations can be promoted within communities. He also suggests that the influence of electronic networks on social capital. Putnam acknowledges that organizations sometimes do have negative effects on a community and that those negatives should be factored into discussions about the effectiveness of the organization. Finally, he looks to local and national government and their influence on these community organizations. Public policy may also be influencing the decline of civic engagement. All of these factors are important focus points for researchers because Putnam believes that only through research and action resulting from that research will civic engagement, and therefore the strength of communities, increase.</p>	

