

# Bowling Alone – Summary Notes

And multiple articles on Social Capital Measurement

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## Bowling Alone

Bowling Alone is the go to research on Social Capital written in 2000. Putnam's underlying assumption is that there is a decline in the US democracy in community involvement. He states that almost every form of community involvement measured in the Roper polls declined significantly over the last 50 years.

The whole focus of this book and study is on the USA. My main interest in reading the book is Putnam's research, understanding and analysis of social capital. I also did extensive research on the web to find questions for measuring social capital. We are looking for criteria for measuring Transformation. Dr. Dan Fountain and others of us believe that Trust is a key criterion in transformation.

There has not been as much study done on transformational indicators while there has been extensive work done on indicators for social capital which is highly correlated with trust. In Neighborhood Transformation we talk a little about social capital in our lessons on ABCD. The book, Bowling Alone is the result of this extensive research which lists 14 key questions to ask which measure social capital.

The core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals does not necessarily have social capital.

Social capital focuses on social networks that exists between us and the character of those networks, the strength of the ties and the extent to which networks foster trust. At the core of social capital is trust.

In order to apply the concept of social capital at a practical and operational level, it can be broken down into five key dimensions:

- Groups and Networks - collections of individuals that promote and protect personal relationships which improve welfare;
- Trust and Solidarity – elements of interpersonal behavior which fosters greater cohesion and more robust collective action
- Collective Action and Cooperation - ability of people to work together toward resolving communal issues
- Social Cohesion and Inclusion - mitigates the risk of conflict and promotes equitable access to benefits of development by enhancing participation of the marginalized

- Information and Communication - breaks down negative social capital and also enables positive social capital by improving access to information. These dimensions capture both the structural and cognitive forms of social capital.

Social capital has an individual and a collective aspect, a private face and a public face. Social capital can have externalities that affect the wider community. Some of the benefits of social capital go to the by-standers while some of the benefits rebound to the immediate interest of the person making the investment.

Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together.

Social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible.

Social capital is in some ways self-replicating. By repeatedly creating trust in relationships with particular people, we come to trust all people more and this social trust makes it easier to make still more new ties. It is as if the machine produced its own parts, and at lower prices. This big idea is the key to the magic of social capital is that particular and local acts magnified over time and across individuals can change whole communities and societies.

Generalized reciprocity, “I’ll do this for you without expecting anything specific back from you in the confident expectation that someone will do something for me down the road”. A society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society. Therefore it is important to ask how the positive consequences of social capital, mutual support, cooperation, trust institutional effectiveness can be maximized while sectarianism, ethnocentrism and corruption minimized.

Generalized reciprocity is a community asset but is not the same as gullibility. Trustworthiness, not simply trust, is the key ingredient. Thick trust embedded in personal relationships of friends and associates that are strong, frequent and nested in wider networks is sometimes called thick trust. Thin trust extends to strangers, like your new acquaintance in a coffee house also rest on the framework of shared social networks and expectations of reciprocity. Thin trust spreads the radius of trust beyond the roster of people we can know personally.

Social or generalized trust is a standing decision to give most people, even those whom one does not know from direct experience, the benefit of doubt. It has been found that people who believe others are honest are themselves less likely to lie. All forms of altruism are demonstratively more common in small towns.

There appears to be three crucial elements in building trust:

- Repeat exposures to others tend to lead to a greater confidence that others can be trusted if:

- The parties are honest in their communication
- The parties follow through on the commitments they make.

A typical pathway from low to high trust moves from joint celebrations and eating together to joint activity around a common hobby to doing favors to each other to discussion of community issues to undertaking a joint goal to relationship building one to one.

There are two type of social capital:

- **Bonding social capital** tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Bonding connect folks who are similar sustain particularized (in-group) reciprocity. It is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. It is a kind of sociological **superglue**.
- **Bridging social capital** goes across boundaries and can generate broader identities and reciprocity while bonding capital bolsters are narrower selves. Bridging connect individuals who are diverse sustain generalized reciprocity. It can be compared to a sociological WD-40 **lubricant**.

World Bank says social capital benefits communities. Social capital offers many benefits to communities. Relationships with kin, neighbors and friends are an important safety net, and are crucial to survival when formal safety nets are absent or inadequate. Trust among community members and their ability to work together for the public good can:

- Reduce problems, such as violence and free-riding, by enforcing shared values and norms of behavior;
- Increase business opportunities by providing informal access to credit and reducing transaction costs;
- Improve the quality of education and the accessibility of health services.

The World Bank also says community involvement builds social capital as high levels of participation in choral societies, civic associations, and burial societies help to solve collective problems and generate further social capital in the following ways:

- Frequent interaction cultivates norms of reciprocity through which actors become more willing to assist one another;
- Improved coordination and communication facilitate information sharing that increases mutual trust;
- Successful cooperation encourages future collaborative efforts in new areas.

People usually form social ties because:

- They are offered a really fun activity
- They crave social contact and believe that getting together will make things better.
- There is a pressing community problem
- They see a clear benefit or harm to themselves
- They believe that their personal involvement will have an impact on the whole effort.

All social relationship happens in groups, sometimes one on one, sometimes in small groups and sometimes in larger groups.

In the past 300 years 35% to 40% of the population has participated in religious congregations with some degree of regularity. Religiosity rivals education as a powerful correlate for most forms of civic engagement. Religiously involved people seem simply to know more people. Religious involvement is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy. About 75% to 80% of people involved in churches give to charity while only 50% to 60% of non-members. Faith based organizations are particularly central to social capital and civic engagement especially in African American communities.

But church membership is on the decline as 10% of people are less likely to claim church membership. Historically Protestant church people provided a disproportionate share of leadership to the wider civic community. Evangelical and Catholic churches put more emphasis on church-centered activities. But today Protestants and Catholics are more like to be involved in the wider community than Evangelicals.

In Yiddish men and women who invest lots of time in formal organizations are termed machers, who are people who make things happen. Machers attend church, volunteer and give to charity and participate in community projects. They tend to be disproportionately male.

Schmoozers are people who spend more time in informal conversations and relationships. They have an active social life but it is less organized and purposeful, more spontaneous and flexible. In general we are spending less time with neighbors and friends than we used to be.

Social networks provide the channels through which we recruit one another for good deeds and social networks which foster norms of reciprocity that encourage attention to other's welfare. The most consistent predictor for giving time and money is involvement in community life. Involvement in social networks is a stronger predictor of volunteering and philanthropy than altruistic attitudes per se. Volunteering is reported 2 to 3 times more frequently than working on a community project which suggests that most people see volunteering as providing personal rather than community service.

Social movements and social capital are so loosely connected that it is sometimes hard to see which comes first. Social movements also create social capital by fostering new identities and extending social networks. Is this what we do in Neighborhood Transformation? Social movements with grassroots involvement both embody and produce social capital. Education is an especially powerful predictor for participation in public, formal organized activities.

There are many possible answers for the mysterious disengagement in the last one third of a century in community involvement which includes:

- Business time and pressure
- Economic hard times
- The movement of women into the paid labor force and the stress of two career families
- Residential mobility

- Suburbanization and sprawl. He says that residents of large metropolitan areas incur a sprawl penalty of 20% on most measures of community involvement.
- Television, the electronic revolution. Americans at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were watching more TV more habitually and more often alone which resulted with civic disengagement. It cannot be conclusively proven but there is very strong circumstantial evidence to this end.
- Changes in structures and scale of the American economy with the raise in chain stores, branch firms and globalization.
- Disruption of marriage and family ties.
  - Currently married dropped from 74% in 1974 to 55% in 1998.
  - Families with kids at home dropped from 40% in 1970 to 26% in 1997.
  - In the last 30 years there are fewer marriages, more divorces, fewer children and more people living along.
  - Americans with children are more likely to be involved in religious activities and more likely to volunteer.
  - Married people are less likely to spend time informally with friends as they are more likely to be homebodies
  - The decline in the traditional family may have contributed to the decline of traditional religion.
- Growth of the welfare state
- The civil rights revolution. Race is a connected to almost all features of our society.
  - Racial differences in association memberships are not large
  - The erosion of social capital has affected all races
  - White flight from certain areas does not seem to be an indicator of social capital
- Vietnam, Watergate and disillusion with public life
- The culture revolt against authority, sex, drugs etc.

Putnam then spends one chapter for each possible major factor. In conclusion he says:

- Pressures of time and money maybe contribute only 10% of the total decline.
- Suburbanization and sprawl maybe contributes another 10% of the problem.
- The effects of electronic entertainment perhaps contributes 25% to the problem
- The most import factor is generational change which accounts for 50% of the problem

A growing body of research suggests that civic connections help make us health, wealthy and wise. Living without social capital is not easy. Social Capitals:

- Allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily.
- Grease the wheels that allows communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy and where they are subjected to repeated interactions with fellow citizens especially on a day to day basis every day social transactions are less costly.
- Improves our lot by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked. People who have active and trusting connections to others develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of society. Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more emphatic in the misfortunes of others.
- Also operates through psychological and biological processes to improve individual's lives. Mounting research shows that people whose lives are rich in social capital cope

better with trauma and fight illness more efficiently. Social capital seems to be a compliment, not substitute for sleeping pills etc.

- In neighborhoods with lots of overlapping connections, individuals more easily learn who can be counted on, and they can better make use of moral suasion to ensure continued attention to problems at hand.

### Findings from Putnam's Study

Robert Putnam then goes on to rate Social Capital state by state using 14 indicators of Social Capital noted below from the Social Capital Index (SCI). He used data that was published regularly in order not to have to do primary research. He specifically wanted to deal with four questions:

- What has been happening to American Social Capital?
- Why?
- What can we do about it in the United States?
- So what does it matter?

Measure Of:	State Range
<b>Community Organization</b>	
Served on committee of local organization in the last 10 years. (%)	
Served as an officer on some club or organization in the last year (%)	
Civic and social organizations per 1,000 population	
Mean number of club meetings attended in last year	4 NV, 11 N&SD
Mean number of group memberships per capita	1.3 LA, 3.3 ND
<b>Engagement in Public Affairs</b>	
Turnout in last two presidential elections	42% SC, 69% MN
Attended public meetings on town or school affairs in last year (%)	10& GA/NY, 32% NH, 29%, UT, 26% WS
<b>Community Volunteerism</b>	
Number of non-profits(501c3) organizations per 1,000 population	1.2 MS, 3.6 VT
Mean number of times worked on community projects last year.	5 NV/MS/LA, 10 UT
<b>Community of Informal Sociability</b>	
Agree that I spend a lot of time visiting friends	
Mean number of times entertained at home in last year	
<b>Social Trust</b>	17%MS, 67%ND
Agree that most people can be trusted	
Agree that most people are honest	

Maps showing the results of the questions state by state can be found in the file Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences. Places with dense associational networks tend to have frequent public meetings on local issues. Places that have higher electoral turnout tend to have high social trust. Place with lots of local clubs tend to support many nonprofits organizations

When you map the states in social capital you tend to find higher social capital in the north and lower in the south.

States that score high on SCI, ie; where residents trust each other are the same states where children flourish. These states are where babies are born healthy, teenagers tend not to be parents, nor drop out of high school nor get involved in violent crime nor die prematurely due to suicide or homicide. In other studies social capital is second only to poverty in the breadth and depth of its effects on children's lives.

In one study of two neighborhoods, one with high malnutrition rate and the other with a low rate, social capital turned out to be the main factor that distinguished the two neighborhoods. The best predictor of which children will avoid problems was related to their mothers being enmeshed in a supportive social network lived in a society supportive neighborhood. Neighborhoods with high levels of social capital tend to be good places to raise children.

Social capital is about as important as poverty, urbanism and racial composition as determinants of homicide. States high in social capital are less pugnacious as measure by peoples rating of how well they would do in a fist fight. Mutual trust and altruism among neighbors and their willingness to intervene when they see children misbehaving went a long way to explain why some neighborhoods are less crime prone than others.

Street gangs represent a form of social capital by providing networks of reciprocity, charity, organizing and a form of social control. Where constructive social capital and institutions have withered gangs emerge to fill the void.

In area where social capital is lacking the effects of poverty, adult unemployment and family breakdown are magnified making that area much worse for adults and children. Social trust, organizational participation and neighborhood cohesion can help break the link between economic disadvantage and teenage trouble making.

## INPUT ON SOCIAL CAPITAL FROM OTHER ARTICLES AND STUDIES

I have included content on understanding Social Capital into the above notes from Bowling Alone primarily leaving this section to look more at individual instruments.

### **Measurement of Social Capital**

Compared to other forms of capital (financial, human), social capital is less tangible, and hence more difficult to measure.

Two approaches to measuring social capital are direct social observation, and aggregating responses from social surveys. Because social capital can assume a variety of forms (levels of trust, norms and sanctions, density of civic associations), the measurement of this construct calls for the use of a variety of indicators.

Examples of such indicators reported in the literature include aggregated responses to social survey items inquiring about the extent of interpersonal trust (e.g., percent of respondents in a community who agree that "most people can be trusted"), or the density of membership in a range of civic associations including church groups, sports groups, hobby groups, fraternal organizations, labor unions, and so on.

World Bank says social capital is measured in three way:

- Comparative Studies
  - In his research comparing north and south Italy, Putnam (1993) examines social capital in terms of the degree of civic involvement, as measured by voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs, and confidence in public institutions. Northern Italy, where all these indicators are higher, shows significantly improved rates of governance, institutional performance, and development when other orthodox factors were controlled for. His recent work on the United States (Putnam 1995, 1998) uses a similar approach, combining data from both academic and commercial sources to show a persistent long-term decline in America's stock of social capital. Putnam validates data from various sources against the findings of the General Social Survey, widely recognized as one of the most reliable surveys of American social life.
- Quantitative Studies
  - Knack and Keefer (1997) use indicators of trust and civic norms from the World Values Survey for a sample of 29 market economies. They use these measures as proxies for the strength of civic associations in order to test two different propositions on the effects of social capital on economic growth, the "Olson effects" (associations stifle growth through rent-seeking) and "Putnam effects" (associations facilitate growth by increasing trust). (Inglehart (1997) has done the most extensive work on the implications of the WVS's results for general theories of modernization and development.)



- Qualitative Studies
  - Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) examine what happens to immigrant communities when some of their members succeed economically, and wish to leave the community. Their interviews reveal the pressures that strong community ties can place on members; so strong are these ties that some members have Anglicized their names to free themselves of the obligations associated with community membership. Gold (1995) provides evidence that Jewish communities in Los Angeles manage to maintain both the integrity of their community structure and participate more fully in mainstream economic life.

## **Instruments Measuring Social Capital**

How Connected Americans Are To Each Other: One simple way is by asking these simple questions:

- How many of your neighbors' first names do you know?
- How often do you attend parades or festivals?
- Do you volunteer at your kids' school? Or help out senior citizens?
- Do you trust your local police?
- Do you know who your U.S. senators are?
- Do you attend religious services? Or go to the theater?
- Do you sign petitions? Or attend neighborhood meetings?
- Do you think the people running your community care about you?
- Do you feel that you can you make a difference?
- How often do you visit with friends or family?

## Roper Social Capital Benchmark Study

This is a benchmark study done in late 2000 into early 2001 which was conducted in 41 US cities which measures various manifestations of social capital. It interview in depth 3003 participants. It is a point of comparison for future studies. It was started at the John F Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University. I have a full report but have not included this on the web site but I did include the Survey itself below

## Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey

A Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey was undertaken in 2000 which 27,000 respondents from 40 communities across the USA. Within the 40 communities they looked at 11 dimensions of social capital covering:

- Trust
- Political engagement
- Giving and volunteering
- Faith-based engagement
- Informal socializing

- Involvement in associations
- Civic leadership
- Diversity of friendships
- Equality of civic participation

Summaries of the relative performance can be found at: [www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey](http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey)

Questions in Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey can be found in the file under the same name. They estimate that this questionnaire can be filled out in 7.5 minutes. There are optional questions which add 5 minutes. The file can also be found at [www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/communitysurvey](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/communitysurvey) which also compared the 40 communities mentioned above. The survey can be used 3 ways:

- Users planning to interview all participants in a group.
- Users planning to add a social capital module to a survey they are already doing.
- Users conducting a free standing short-form study of social capital on a sub-segment of a group to large to fully interview.

### Integral Alliance

Integral Ministry is made up of 38 Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) interested in transformation. They want to know 'What is the relationship between faith, spirituality, and development' and 'How might they define spiritual impact'? This is a forum designed for practitioners and scholars interested in the role of spirituality in faith-based development. They came up with a number of indicators found in the document 'indicator discussion'.

### Social Capital Assessment Tool

This is a fairly complex and long questionnaire which can be found under the name SOCAT questionnaire. It covers eight areas with multiple questions in each area:

- Community maps indications locations of community assets and services.
- Observational notes of group process and summary of issues discussed.
- List of positive characteristics of community assets and services.
- List of negative characteristics of community assets and services.
- List of all formal and informal institutions in the community.
- Case study of collective community action.
- Institutional Venn diagrams of impact and accessibility.
- Institution Web diagrams of institutional network relationships.

### Understanding and Measuring Social Capital

This is a 320 page book written in 2002 by Grootaert and van Bastelaer and published by The World Bank Washington DC which gives full details of doing a SOCAT with results found in different countries. Most of what I would present has been presented earlier.

## Measuring Social Capital in the UK

*The British have added an additional type of social capital in addition to Bonding and Bridging. This is Linking social capital which describes connections with people in positions of power and is characterized by relations between those within a hierarchy where there are different levels of power; it is good for accessing support from formal institutions. This is concerned with relations between people who are not on an equal footing e.g. job searching at the Job Centre.*

They have a Social Capital Harmonized Question Set (HQS) that includes.

- Survey of English Housing (selected questions)
- Home Office Citizenship Survey 2005 (core)
- General Household Survey Trailer 2004/05 (full)
- Health Survey for England older focus questions 2005 (selected questions)
- Families and Children Survey Wave 7 (2005) (core)

They are supported by ESDS Government, through the ESDS Longitudinal study. The full Users guide is found under SoCCAP Users Guide UK.