

Leisure, Social Capital, and Democratic Citizenship

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A heuristic distinction between participatory and representative democracy is applied here to examine the relationship between leisure and democratic citizenship. Different forms of leisure support different forms of democracy. The concept of social capital is proposed as a primary linkage between leisure and democracy. Leisure activity which generates social capital is more conducive to greater democracy than leisure activity which does not. Recent examinations of the content of leisure in the U.S. suggest an increase in leisure activity that does not generate social capital and thus provides only weak support for democracy. Implications of this finding for leisure research and the of leisure services are explored, with the concept of social capital suggested as central to the transdisciplinary analysis of leisure's political significance.

KEYWORDS: *Leisure, democracy, citizenship, social capital*

Introduction

The central issue addressed in this essay is the role leisure plays, or alternatively, might play, in the enablement of democratic citizenship.¹ If recent leisure inquiry has paid insufficient attention to the political dimensions of leisure, and thus to its contributions to democratic citizenship, the founders of the recreation profession *did* pay such attention, as Storrman (1991, 1993) has ably shown. The reform movements associated with the emergence of the recreation field were pre-eminently concerned with leisure's political meanings and uses. The playground movement, the rational recreation movement, the industrial recreation movement: All had avowedly political aims, of which certain kind of passive and conforming citizenship was one. This outmoded view of leisure's to democratic citizenship cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged if we are to achieve a fuller understanding of leisure's political dimensions.

An appreciation of leisure's contributions to democratic citizenship begins with an examination of conceptualizations of democracy. Different forms of democracy (of which there are many; see particularly Held, 1996;

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also Dahl, 1989) entail different forms of citizenship, which draw in turn on different forms of leisure. The normative requirements of differing conceptualizations of democracy, especially their presuppositions about human interaction, have implications for thinking about citizenship and leisure, which must be congruent with the larger conceptualizations of democracy. There are empirical issues in play here as well, for if the results of empirical analysis of citizenship and leisure do not support the normative presuppositions about them, then the larger conceptualizations of democracy in which these normative presuppositions are embedded are called into question (but see Davis, 1964). These questions are explored here using two admittedly stylized conceptualizations of democracy and their associated understandings of citizenship. This discussion serves as background for the introduction of the concept of social capital. Once this concept is explicated it becomes possible to examine the content of contemporary leisure with an eye to its contribution, or lack thereof, to democratic citizenship in the United States, using recent analyses by R. D. Putnam, supplemented by J. Robinson's and G. Godbey's time diary data. Debate over these findings has been contentious, however, so some consideration of their critics is appropriate. With this done, it is then possible to review the implications of the argument presented here for the analysis of leisure's contribution to democracy and to suggest how the concept of social capital might serve to organize further inquiry into leisure's political dimensions. Underlying the entire essay is an emphatically normative commitment to enhancing leisure's contribution to the creation of a genuinely democratic society and politics, specifically to what will shortly be termed strong citizenship.

Democracy and Democratic Citizenship

Since it is clearly impossible to review here the entire range of conceptualizations of democracy, it is more useful to place them along a continuum from representative to participatory, with the understanding that actual democracies may show features of both (see Figure 1). The distinction is helpful in considering leisure's role in democracy because as one moves from representative to participatory forms of democracy, the demands on leisure increase accordingly. At the extreme of representative democracy, little political involvement in leisure is required; at the extreme of participatory democracy, perhaps too much is required, justifying something like Oscar Wilde's alleged criticism of socialism, that it takes too many evenings.

Representative democracy is the more familiar conceptualization of democracy. It rests on the premise that citizens are themselves unable or unwilling (a distinction of great importance) to participate directly in the selection of policy alternatives, whether for reasons of ability or logistics (again a distinction of great importance), and that the extent of their effective political involvement is restricted to the selection of representatives charged

Participatory democracy	← ← ← → → →	Representative democracy
More citizen involvement		Less citizen involvement
Individual focused		Group focused
Communicative		Adversarial
Process orientation		Outcome orientation
Developmental model		Market model
Greater demands on leisure		Lesser demands on leisure

Figure 1. Characteristics of the participatory and representative conceptualizations of democracy

with the task of more or less looking after citizen interests.² Groups of various types, from political parties to special interest associations and “mailing list” organizations (often limited to single issues), mediate between individual citizens and their elected representatives, and increasingly appointed officials as well. Elections serve at least in principle to tally the distribution of interests in society, with representatives allotted on either a winner take all or a proportional basis. Mansbridge (1983) has aptly labeled this process “adversarial democracy.” Opponents are regarded as adversaries in the sense that their electoral or legislative defeat is the central objective of the political process so understood, frequently largely independently of any actual policy differences. As this process has evolved in the U.S., it centers on interest-based competition for decision-making influence (and its spoils) among tightly defined groups, especially those working in or closely with the governmental and economic hierarchies. It is a fundamentally instrumental process, the basic acts entailed being the calculation of interest and the manipulative persuasion of others.

Participatory democracy, perhaps best known in the U.S. from the New England town meeting, rests on the more or less direct involvement of citizens in the discussion, selection, and (possibly) the implementation of policy alternatives. Participatory -democracy therefore obviously requires greater effort and commitment than representative democracy. If the latter is largely outcome oriented, the former is process oriented. Citizens are assumed able to make informed, autonomous choices among policy alternatives and to be willing to make some effort to prepare themselves to do so. They are also assumed able to expand their participatory abilities as they gain experience

²It is worth recalling in this context that democracy has not always been favored in the United States. There was in fact profound hostility towards democracy in the founding period. Both Federalists and Anti-Federalists, opposed as they were in so much else, feared democracy as a threat to economic and social stability. The Constitution as originally passed, for example, limited popular election only to the House of Representatives; a deliberate restriction on the degree of actual democracy in the new government. See Hanson, 1985, ch. 2.

and knowledge (cf. Thompson, 1970). Indeed, one of the primary tenets of participatory democracy is that citizens not only are able but in fact seek to develop their skills and knowledge. Rather than taking politics to be fundamentally adversarial, participatory democracy regards political activity as a cooperative process that has as one of its goals its own steady refinement and expansion. Such a conceptualization of democracy is at least potentially radical because it always points beyond any existing state of affairs towards greater democratization. Thus in contrast to representative democracy, participatory democracy entails the cooperative identification and discussion of common as well as opposed interests in order to determine if and how these interests might be accommodated. Participatory democracy is in this sense a communicative process, and the citizen, rather than groups, is assumed to be the basic unit in it.

These are admittedly stylized characterizations of two conceptualizations of democracy, but they will serve for present purposes to indicate clear differences in forms of democratic citizenship. In representative democracy, with its assumption of more or less limited citizen involvement, the focus is on persuading a citizen to make a particular electoral choice, to vote in a certain way, much as advertisers attempt to persuade consumers to make certain purchases. If the market metaphor and economic rationality have often been applied to such electoral politics (a classic instance is Downs, 1957); the fact is that the market produces consumers, not citizens. Consumers do not participate in the design and manufacture of the products they purchase, and their interactions with sellers are largely cursory and instrumentally motivated. Voters are similarly removed from the selection and packaging of political candidates. Except in the limited sense of occasional voter and consumer of political information, the conception of the citizen in representative democracy (acknowledging that there are exceptions to this generalization) is as a passive spectator characterized by interests that are inventoried much as in market research and represented by individuals selected much as a product would be (see Schumpeter, 1942, for a further classic statement of this approach to democracy; see also Held's, 1996, pp. 168-98, discussion of the implications of Schumpeter's argument). The citizenship required by representative democracy may therefore be labeled "weak citizenship."

Participatory democracy makes other demands. It assumes citizens are both able and willing to involve themselves in the political process, that they desire the contact with their neighbors into which this process will bring them. Rather than responding to either / or choices presented to them by political institutions like parties with which citizens are only vaguely affiliated, participatory citizens engage actively in forming alternative policy options. Their focus is on direct involvement in creating the communities in which they wish to live. This entails open discussion of choice among alternatives citizens create themselves. Rather than a market transaction, participatory politics are a communicative, educational process in which the issues and interests confronting the community are illuminated and the abilities of cit-

izens to participate are steadily enhanced. The conception of the citizen in participatory democracy is thus of an engaged individual who makes political activity a reasonable priority, who understands the need for preparation in order to engage in informed communication with fellow citizens in order to define the situation in which they find themselves together, and who actively seeks opportunities to refine her / his abilities and knowledge to contribute to creating the community in which he/she wishes to live. The citizenship required by participatory democracy may therefore be labeled “strong citizenship” (adapting this term from Barber, 1984).

Leisure and Social Capital

These characterizations of the representative and the participatory ends of the democratic continuum are intended to be heuristic, that is, to enable us to discover how forms of leisure contribute to the formation of democratic citizenship. Reviewing these characterizations positions us to understand how different configurations of leisure (i.e., its forms, contents, and their distribution) lend themselves either to strong or to weak democratic citizenship. This occurs both directly and indirectly. Directly, leisure has political implications, first, because political activity of all kinds has a temporal dimension that includes leisure; second, because configurations of leisure reveal much about the distribution of resources and of power in a given society and how these are mutually reinforcing; and third, because leisure can become an arena for challenging any existing distribution of resources and of power in the name of the greater expansion and development of human capacities.³

Visible as these directly political implications of leisure are (or should be), however, one of leisure’s most fundamental contributions to the formation-of democratic citizenship occurs more indirectly. This is leisure’s role in the formation of social capital, a concept given theoretic refinement by sociologist J. Coleman and the subject of considerable recent discussion as a result of its application by political scientist R.D. Putnam to the analysis of democratic stability in Italy and in the United States.

The concept of social capital is grounded in a perspective that emphasizes the interconnectedness rather than the separateness of human activity and human goals. All social capital shares two basic characteristics, according to Coleman (1990, p. 302; see generally ch12). First, if present social capital is always found as some aspect of asocial structure—for example, families, schools, secondary associations, or bowling leagues—so that it is a feature of social relations. Second, it always serves in some way to facilitate the actions of individuals within those social structures. When social capital is present, it tends to enable individuals to act more effectively within the social structures in which they find themselves. In Coleman’s words, social capital is

³These themes are developed at greater length in my essay “Emancipation and Critique: Towards a Critical Theory of Leisure,” to be included in TL. Burton & E.L. Jackson (Eds.), *Leisure Studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century* “in press” from Venture Publishing, State College, Pa.

composed of “social-structural resources” that serve as a “capital asset for the individual.” Just like other forms of capital, the human and the economic, social capital constitutes an asset that can be used, increased, or depleted. But unlike the other forms of capital, it cannot remain static. Left unused, it decreases, that is, people lose the ability or opportunity to use it. If it is used, it is not consumed but tends actually to accumulate, that is, there is more social capital available for future use.

Considered as a social relation, the basic forms of social capital are obligations, expectations, and knowledge. Obligations are part of occupying any social role, for example, as a parent or choir member or Red Cross volunteer. Put another way, certain forms of action are inherent in specific social roles. Those who enter into a social relation with a person in her / his status as a role occupant have legitimate expectations about the role occupant’s likely actions based on the obligations associated with that role. One parent can legitimately expect the other parent, for example, to act in the best interests of their child. A child’s parents can legitimately expect a teacher to care for their child’s well-being at school, just as that teacher may legitimately expect parents to involve themselves in the child’s education. A person in need can legitimately expect assistance from a Red Cross volunteer, not rejection. Choir members may legitimately expect each other to attend rehearsals faithfully. Knowledge of these social role-based obligations and expectations makes appropriate social action possible by understanding the norms attaching to social roles. This knowledge is part of a person’s social repertoire, enabling her/him to deal with specific aspects of social relations. Knowledge of obligations and expectations attending social roles increases with the degree to which individuals are involved in social structures. Further, knowledge developed in one social structure is transferable to others, allowing individuals to cope with new social roles. Social capital is in this sense both cumulative and transferable. The more social capital a person possesses in one role, relation, or structure, the more social capital is available in others.

In an important essay on “The Prosperous Community,” R.D. Putnam (1993b) defined social capital as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (pp. 35-6).⁴ He suggested that social capital is cumulative and transferable not only individually but also socially, that is, the more social capital is available to individuals, the more it is available to society. A significant supply of social capital improves the quality of life and enhances social cooperation. In Putnam’s (1995a) words, “For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital” (p. 67). This stock develops in part because, as both Coleman and Putnam

⁴Putnam seems to regard social capital as inherently democratic, and certainly the politics he analyzes are at least weakly democratic. Although that is the reference here as well, it should be noted that there is no conceptually a priori reason to limit social capital as a concept only to democratic contexts.

pointed out, social capital has attributes of what economists call public goods, which are goods that if available to one person are similarly available to all. Although public goods can be deliberately created, as for example a public park, they can also be created indirectly as artifacts of activities with different primary objectives. Networks of obligations, expectations, and increased knowledge of them can all arise from social roles and relations focused on quite different purposes than developing social capital. This increases the individual social capital available and allows its transfer across multiple social roles, relations, and structures, contributing to the accumulation of social capital both individually and societally.

Putnam contended in his now widely known essay "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" (1995a) that Americans more and more are withdrawing from those social structures in and through which social capital is developed. His examination of data from various national surveys suggested there has been a dramatic reduction in organizational memberships, political participation, and generally in associational life. Since from the time of de Tocqueville's analysis of democracy in America this aspect of society has been regarded as fundamental to sustaining democratic attitudes and practices, any decline or reduction in could have ominous implications for the vitality of democracy in the United States.

Putnam's analysis has been subjected to considerable criticism and he has withdrawn a portion (but only a portion) of his argument for methodological reasons outside his control (see Helliwell & Putnam, 1997). What in the midst of this debate has been insufficiently attended to is the empirical support given by Putnam's earlier work to his theoretical argument about the importance of social capital to developing and strengthening democracy.

In a masterful analysis of democracy and regional governmental reform in contemporary Italy, Putnam (1993a) found that the success of democratic reform was strongly related to the presence of democratic social capital in the various regions of Italy. Among the indicators investigated by Putnam were social engagement, equality (defined as horizontal rather than vertical patterns of social reciprocity and cooperation, or, in other words, obligations and expectations), attitudes of social solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and a strong associational life (pp. 86-91). His analysis demonstrated that where these indicators were present, democratic reform tended to succeed. Significantly, the "vibrancy of associational life" turned out to be a "key indicator" of social capital's presence; the most frequent associational memberships were in sports, recreational, or cultural groups, that is, in leisure (pp. 91-2, with Table 4.1). Reading newspapers, often a leisure activity and at that time still the major means of gaining political information in Italy, was also strongly associated with democratic attitudes (p. 92). *These findings suggest that specific forms of leisure activity contribute to the development of the social capital central to democracy and democratic citizenship.* Participation in specific forms of leisure activity was, in Putnam's findings, strongly and positively associated with the existence of social norms of tolerance and trust, which in turn support democratic attitudes and practices. The longer these social norms had existed, the greater their association with democratic social capital (ch.

5 generally). This suggests that alterations in patterns of social capital producing roles, relations, and structures—not least in leisure—may have potentially significant long term effects.

If it is reasonable to suggest that a commitment to the maximization of democracy entails a similar commitment to strong citizenship, then it is equally reasonable to suggest that if leisure is to contribute to the formation of the social capital necessary for strong citizenship, it must include the attributes of strong democratic citizenship: participation, communication, autonomy, and development. Autonomous forms of social activity in which individuals are able to enhance existing and develop new capacities build democratic social capital. Thus (1) the more the individual participates actively in social structures, (2) the more autonomy the individual experiences, and (3) the more her / his individual capacities develop, then (4) the greater the accumulation of social capital that may be transferred not only to other leisure activities, but to other social roles, relations, and structures generally. The forms, content, and distribution of leisure activities represent a major potential factor in the development of democratic social capital and thus in the stability of democratic society.

Set in this conceptual framework grounded in Putnam's empirical analysis of Italy, his disturbing findings in the United States take on increased significance.⁵ In several essays Putnam (1995a, 1995b, 1996) reported a significant decline in those activities, many of them leisure-based, which we can now link with the development of democratic social capital. To appreciate this, it must be remembered that social capital is cumulative and transferable, or, put another way, social engagement or disengagement are not one dimensional phenomena. They are instead found in a wide variety of potentially disparate social structures. Putnam's examples are useful here. He (1995a) reported declines in directly political activity including voting (down 25%) and in civic participation, defined as having during the last year "attended a public meeting on town or school affairs" (down 9%). General Social Survey data analyzed by Putnam revealed slippages in religious involvement, labor union memberships, PTAs, civic and fraternal organization activity, volunteering, and, yes, in bowling leagues (pp. 68-70). The question arises: What change in the content of leisure might account for these declines in social capital generating activities?

The title of one of Putnam's (1995b) essays reveals his answer. In "Tuning In, Tuning Out," he suggested that much of the decline in civic engagement is attributable to the dominance of television in American life. He

⁵It should be emphasized that although Putnam is particularly concerned with associational activity, this is not the only source of social capital formation. Social interaction generally, whether structured or unstructured, plays a significant role. As noted below, there is evidence even unstructured social activity is declining in the U.S., a trend confirmed by Oldenburg (1997), who notes the disappearance of opportunities for informal social gatherings in what he labels "the great good place" or "the third place," terms which embrace a wide range of locales that foster direct interaction and sense of communal belonging, i.e., someplace other than home or work.

argued that standard demographic explanations fail to account for this decline, including those explanations based on education levels, mobility and suburbanization patterns, extended work hours, the entry of women into the workforce, marriage and child rearing patterns, welfare policies, and racial politics. Putnam did find a set of sharp intergenerational differences in civic engagement (see Miller & Shanks, 1996, Ch. 3, for similar intergenerational differences in electoral participation), but what appears to have created the intergenerational differences is the steady expansion of television viewing. According to Putnam, if in 1950 approximately ten percent of homes had television sets, by 1959 ninety percent did; by 1995, this reached 98.3%, and the average number of television sets per home was 2.3 (Bureau of the Census, 1997, p. 566, Table 886). Moreover, even taking educational and financial differences into account, television watching increased over fifty percent from the 1950s to 1995. Summarizing the impact of television on civic engagement, Putnam pointed out that unlike other leisure activity, television tends to be associated with lower levels of social activity outside the home; that frequency of television watching is associated with lower levels of social trust in others and in institutions and with increased levels of social passivity; and that intensive television watching by children and adolescents might be associated with increased aggressiveness and lessened scholastic performance, with attendant negative consequences for future development.

Other studies have, of course, demonstrated accelerating levels of television watching. Oxford Analytica reported in 1986 (p. 91), for example, that this was the only free time activity which had increased across all age groups. In their important recent compilation of time diary data for 1965, 1975, and 1985, Robinson and Godbey (1997, p. 125) found that of the 39.6 hours free time available during the average 1985 week, fifteen of these (37.88%) were devoted to the primary activity of television watching, making it by far the most frequent leisure activity.⁶ They added that including secondary television watching increased television's share of free time activity to over fifty percent (pp. 124-5). The ratio of television viewing to reading, it should be noted, stood at something like seven to one, with newspaper reading decreasing. Robinson and Godbey's findings (p. 144, reporting 1975

⁶As alarming as these figures are, those reported in the 1997 *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (p. 565, Table 88'7) are even more so. The Census Bureau reports an average daily per person viewing time of 4.027 hours in 1990, rising to 4.315 in 1995. The Bureau projects 4.452 hours daily in 1998, rising to 4.520 in 2000. This translates to weekly averages of 28.189 hours in 1990, 30.205 in 1995, 31.164 in 1998 (projected), and 31.640 in 2000 (projected). Making the deliberately optimistic assumption of eight hours working, eight hours sleeping, and eight hours for personal time, this means that in 1990 some 50.3% of daily personal time was devoted to television viewing and a projected 56.5% in 2000. Since the Census Bureau derives its data from industry ratings, these figures quite likely overestimate, perhaps substantially, the actual viewing time. Robinson and Godbey's time diary method is superior here, but the trend in all studies of television viewing is the same: Viewing is increasing and steadily consumes greater portions of people's time.

data) also supported Putnam's contention that television watching anchors people more firmly in their homes and reduces the level of their socializing and organizational activity, further suggesting that participation in social capital forming activities has indeed declined (see also p. 176), as Putnam claimed. From 1965 to 1985 Robinson and Godbey found an average decrease of 1.1 hours per week in socializing, 0.1 hour in religious activity, and 0.5 hour in organizational activity. If in fact social capital is, as Coleman and Putnam both suggested, something that increases with use and atrophies with nonuse, declines in the forms and amounts of democratic social capital forming free time activity are cause for considerable alarm. This concern should be heightened if in fact these activities are being replaced by one that is actually destructive of democratic social capital, i.e., by television.

It is important not to embrace the Putnam and the Robinson and Godbey findings too quickly. The debate over the amount of free time available to Americans, and what activities they engage in during that time, is hardly one-sided or settled. The poles in this argument are Schor's (1991) claim that from 1970 to 1990 Americans added almost an entire month of additional work time and Robinson and Godbey's counterclaim that it is free time which has actually increased. Quite possibly both miss the mark by failing to account for structural changes in employment in the U.S., by not considering the implications of distinguishing between time at work and time working, and by omitting questions of social control versus autonomy in work. In a constructive criticism of this literature, Bluestone and Rose (1997), for example, found an increase in work time, though nowhere near what Schor claimed and one mediated by changes in the forms and distribution of work. The two substantial points perhaps most likely to emerge from this debate are, first, Hunnicutt's (1988) major argument, that the issue of reduced work hours and increased free time has faded from the American political and labor scenes; and, second, that the content of free time is of considerably greater importance than its duration, a point on which most discussants agree.

Here too, however, the issue is not altogether clear. One constraint on the usefulness of the Robinson and Godbey study is its restriction to three data sets each ten years apart, ending in 1985. Although Putnam used data extending beyond this, he also depended on Robinson and Godbey to bolster his argument about the effects of television. One question, then, is whether we see here trends, cycles, anomalies, or fundamental changes in patterns of social capital creating activities. As already noted, Putnam offered a correction to part of his findings since the General Social Survey on which a portion of his analysis rested failed to inquire about significant forms of associational memberships and activity. Also at issue is whether Putnam employed adequate controls for fluctuations in populations relevant to particular forms of activity. As Ladd (1996) pointed out, for example, Putnam's claim that PTA memberships have declined might reflect only a decrease in the number of parents of school-aged children, and not a decrease in the

rate of membership. Beyond this, Roper polling data indicated continued high involvement in many forms of activity Putnam claimed have decreased (in addition to Ladd, 1996, see Cantril & Cantril, 1996). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) found sustained levels of political involvement, albeit with a distribution among social and economic groups that has troublesome implications (see also 1997). There is, finally, some evidence that memberships in "mailing list" organizations might be more significant in social capital formation than Putnam allowed (Pettinico, 1996). The levels of activity suggested in these sources are, however, hard to square with Robinson and Godbey's time diary data since it is unlikely the limited and decreasing time spent on associational activities they reported could contain them. This might be the effect of averaging amounts of time as opposed to distributions and frequencies of activity, though Robinson and Godbey spent some effort addressing the methodological advantages of the time diary approach. It is clear, in any event; that significant differences exist in the literature and that considerable energy must still be directed at pinning down the forms, character, and extent of social capital producing activities in the United States.

Addressing this issue is made somewhat more difficult because the modes of civic engagement are changing. Since the 1980s, levels of trust in conventional political institutions and processes have registered dramatic lows in the United States (see, e.g., Miller & Shanks, 1996, ch. 2). There has been a sense that these institutions and processes are unresponsive to citizen participation and are instead corrupt or dominated by special interests. Although time remains a major -political resource, as Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 1997) pointed out, its efficacy has been undermined by the increased importance of money. Those at the higher end of the economic scale engage in significant political activities such as contacting and meeting with public officials, engaging in political communication, and taking part in political or government meetings far more than do those at the lower end. The more well off are also of course able to use money as a means of participation with greater frequency. If Linder's (1970) prediction that leisure would become characterized by more intensive consumption to maximize the utility of any single unit of free time has in fact not been fully born out (as suggested, e.g., by findings on the extent of television watching), it might in some ways have become true of political participation. The ability to combine money with time-based modes of participation appears to increase the utility of that participation; the ability to contribute only time to participation appears to restrict the efficacy of participation. The undemocratic potential of this development is clear.

In part as a response to dissatisfaction with conventional politics, and in part as new issue clusters have emerged, some participation has shifted to alternative groups not directly included in existing political institutions and processes. These have been labeled "new social movements," encompassing feminist, ethnic, ecological, and lifestyle groups, as well as issue oriented groups in local communities. At times very unstructured and informal, they have served both as an assertion of identity and as a strategy for political

involvement addressing issues excluded or marginalized in conventional politics. Their members have seen them explicitly as attempts to renew democratic political culture (Cohen, 1985). Among the primary resources brought to this renewal effort is time. As Offe pointed out (1985; cf. 1987), because they are frequently located on the margins of dominant socio-economic formations participants in the new social movements appear able “to spend considerable amounts of time on political activities” (p. 834).⁷ To the degree the unstructured and informal nature of such groups screens them from view in surveys and other studies, the result would be an underestimate to some extent of actual levels of civic engagement. How significant this underestimate might be is an open question, but at the least the existence of these groups represents a possible counter assertion of time against money in civic engagement, with potentially significant consequences for the development of social capital.

Analyzing Leisure’s Contribution to Democracy

A series of conclusions emerges from the preceding discussion which might inform further inquiry into the connection between leisure and the formation of democratic social capital. First, it is conceptually clear that different forms of leisure are likely to support different forms of citizenship, strong or weak, and are thus also likely to support different forms of democracy, participatory or representative. Second, it is also likely that money aside, strong citizenship requires substantially greater commitment of time than weak citizenship. Third, leisure is a significant arena for the formation of social capital, with empirical evidence suggesting an important association of democratic social capital with specific forms of leisure activity. Fourth, there is empirical evidence that forms of leisure conceptually linked to strong citizenship are declining in the U.S., though there remains debate on the point. Two caveats may be offered here: It seems clear there is in any case a significant level of distrust of politics in the U.S., a possibly inhibiting factor on democratic social capital formation; and there is evidence money has replaced time as a form of effective political involvement with corresponding consequences for the degree of actual democracy in the U.S. In sum, then, there are conceptual and empirical grounds for asserting the connection between leisure and democracy, but empirical evidence is mixed on the extent to which contemporary leisure actually contributes to sustaining democracy in the U.S.

These conclusions suggest at the least that the political dimensions of leisure offer a rich field for transdisciplinary inquiry, with the concept of social capital playing a central role. There are economic, sociological, and

⁷As a reviewer for this *Journal* pointed out, Offe’s analysis is weakened to the degree it could not address issues of hegemony in multicultural societies, including questions of political access and action. This issue was not, however, within the scope of Offe’s essays cited here.

ethical as well as the obvious political issues involved here. Students of leisure may profit from the existing literature in other fields, to which they may contribute by giving attention to the preconditions for various forms of leisure activity, the distribution of the necessary resources, and the mechanisms by which social capital is formed in leisure, with its subsequent links to other arenas of human interaction. This is an opportunity to broaden the scope of leisure inquiry, to build bridges to other avenues of social research both conceptually and empirically.

The incorporation of the concept of social capital into leisure analysis might take several paths which can be ranged, as in the following five points, from the more applied and specific to the more academic and abstract. In any case, rigorous conceptual and empirical analysis is required.

First, knowing that social capital is often, as Putnam (1993b) noted, “a byproduct of other social activities” (p. 38) gives increased importance to the forms of leisure programmed, sponsored, promoted, or endorsed by the recreation profession. Democratic social capital grows out of leisure activity that fosters democratic norms like autonomy, trust, cooperation, and open communication. To the degree leisure does not foster these norms, or indeed creates opposing norms like distrust and isolation, leisure falls short of the democratic standard. In a putatively democratic society, there are ethical and professional obligations to provide leisure activity that enables democratic citizenship. This is not the same as the sometimes blatant indoctrination employed in the early years of the profession when autonomy was minimized, trust and cooperation were grounded in maintaining an existing social and economic hierarchy, and communication was largely one way. Acknowledging the importance of democratic social capital creation does not entail repeating the errors of the past. It does entail much greater sensitivity to the forms of leisure programmed, sponsored, promoted, or endorsed by the recreation profession and suggests the need for more interaction between practitioners and researchers on the implications of research for practice.

Second, democratic social capital cannot emerge from activities administered in nondemocratic fashions. *How* leisure activities are provided might be equally as important as what these activities are. One of the tendencies in a limited democracy such as that prevailing in the U.S. is to transform citizens into clients. Citizens participate more or less directly in decisions that shape their communities; clients receive benefits and entitlements dispensed by an administrative or professional hierarchy. It is too easy to allow claims of expertise to degenerate into claims of authority. We live in an age of specialists, yet one lesson to be learned from the history of democracy is that democracy cannot thrive when given over to specialists who operate by doing for rather than with citizens. Certainly there are matters, e.g., the details of operations, that require specialized knowledge, but this is no excuse for extending claims of authority further and further into questions of policy. Democracy, it must be remembered, is educational and developmental. Programs must be structured and administered in ways that not only maximize

genuine citizen participation in policy and general operations decisions, but that also expand citizen ability to participate more fully in the future.⁸

Third, we must consider the effects the mode of leisure has on the development of social capital. These modes, which are unlikely to be pure, run from private through commercial to public.⁹ In a market society the commercial mode becomes especially significant. It is an open question whether commercially provided leisure activity creates democratic social capital. There is reason to believe such experiences in fact replicate instrumental, work-based attitudes, but this, too, requires investigation. Of particular concern in a democratic society are inequalities in access to commercial leisure. Some commercial leisure is extremely exclusive, or demands extensive preparation and equipment; some is widely available. We do not know much in general about the differential effects on participants of such factors, and little about their effects on social capital formation. These are important questions given the increasing prevalence of commercial leisure, but similar questions may be asked about public leisure. It would be valuable to know more about participation in public and commercial leisure, for example, to be able to compare their effects on democratic social capital formation. This is particularly relevant in a society with large and growing disparities in wealth and other resources. Finally, although we know somewhat more about private leisure and social capital formation, we do not know how it compares to the other modes of leisure. This is necessary to examine the implications of broad patterns of leisure activity. A preponderance of one mode or another might have potentially significant effects on the relative presence and distribution of democratic social capital in society.

Fourth, we need a better sense of the individual and societal resources necessary for the development of social capital in leisure. Economic resources are central here, of course, but so are education, previous experience levels, physical and mental abilities, social affiliations, and so on. Establishing that certain leisure activity does in fact develop democratic social capital is

⁸A reviewer for this *Journal* suggested the “leisure services delivery continuum” discussed by Murphy, Niepoth, Jamieson, & Williams (1991, pp. 115-31) has some possible relevance to the points made here. This concept is certainly a step forward from traditional conceptualizations of service delivery, but even at the advocacy end of the continuum these authors conceive of the agency as an “active *representative of its constituency*” or as “*mediator of citizen problems*” (p. 117, Figure 3.2). The agency is thus seen as continuing to do for rather than *with* the citizen, with the most significant change coming perhaps in the range of issues with which a leisure services agency would concern itself rather than in its relations with citizens.

⁹This terminology is not entirely satisfactory. “Private” and “public” should not be taken to denote locations, but rather the mode *of* providing leisure. “Private leisure” is meant here to include that provided by the participants themselves. “Commercial leisure” is that leisure which is purchased, or which centers around the consumption of purchased services and products. This would include such items as entrance fees, equipment (where an activity is equipment intensive or dependent), lodging, travel, and so on. “Public leisure” is that leisure which is provided by public entities such as government at all levels. Nonprofit agencies occupy something of a gray area here. It is clear in any event that these modes shade into one another, which is itself a matter for further examination.

only part of the puzzle. It is necessary to know more about the resources required to enable this activity, and how these are distributed. The existing maldistribution of wealth and other resources in the U.S. suggests significant energy must be devoted to their redistribution and to the creation of additional resources in order that access to social capital formation become more equal. Here leisure is part of a much larger cluster of issues associated with what a just society is and how it may be achieved.

Fifth and finally, though perhaps most basically, we simply do not know enough about what forms of leisure are associated with the development of social capital in general. Nor do we necessarily know much about the process of social capital development itself. It is likely there are findings already available in leisure studies and other fields that will be of assistance in exploring these questions. This information is not, however, systematically formulated in a way that can both guide additional inquiry and be of assistance in practical application. Perhaps in addition to questions about motivation, satisfaction, and constraints in and on leisure, we need to ask about the formation of trust, cooperation, and social connectedness. Doing so could reduce the isolation of leisure research and at the same time contribute to practical action enhancing the formation of democratic social capital.

It should be clear in any event that conceptually and empirically, academically and professionally, there is a significant connection between leisure and democratic social capital. This connection opens new avenues for leisure inquiry and poses new challenges for leisure practice. The debate between Putnam and his critics, and the arguments on trends in leisure resources like time and wealth, suggest there are important questions yet to be answered. Doing so receives special urgency if the negative findings on democratic social capital formation in contemporary American leisure are born out. If the issue remains in doubt, it should nonetheless be apparent that we have reason for concern whether current leisure is adequate to, the task of democratizing our society. That is the fundamental challenge of citizenship, and it is one we must all set about fulfilling.

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