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WHAT WE DO TOGETHER: THE STATE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AMERICA TODAY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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WHAT WE DO TOGETHER: THE STATE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AMERICA TODAY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

UNITED STATES CONGRESS,
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m., in Room 106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Mike Lee, Vice Chairman, presiding.

Representatives present: LaHood, Maloney, Beyer, Jr., and Paulsen

Senators present: Lee, Cotton, Cruz, Heinrich, Klobuchar, and Peters.

Staff present: Daniel Bunn, Kim Corbin, Connie Foster, Martha Gimbel, Heath Hansen, Colleen Healy, Adam Hersh, Christina King, Paul Lapointe, Justus Myers, Thomas Nicholas, Matthew Nolan, Kwabena Nsiah, Victoria Park, Ernesto Rodriguez, and Scott Winship.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, VICE CHAIRMAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH

Vice Chairman Lee. Welcome. We call this hearing on the Joint Economic Committee to order. The title that we have selected for this hearing is "What We Do Together: The State of Social Capital in America Today."

I want to thank each of our witnesses and our Committee members for joining us today.

Our Nation today faces very real economic challenges. As we heard during our Committee's hearing last month, economic growth during the recovery has been meager and uneven. The U.S. economy has become less dynamic and innovative than in recent decades. We miss the strong productivity growth America enjoyed in the mid-twentieth century and the unusually large wage gains it brought.

However, in historical and comparative perspective most Americans enjoy unprecedented material living standards. Our economic problems often take the form of unsatisfactory rates of improvement. We are growing richer less quickly than we did when we were poorer.

Nevertheless, many Americans—poor, middle class, and wealthy—feel that something in our society is amiss. It is a feeling that cannot be reduced to economic anxiety. Rather, there is a sense that our social fabric in America is fraying.

And these concerns are reflected in objective measures of family and community health. To cite just a few of the trends that may be grouped under the rubric of "social capital": marriage and church going have declined; distrust of the Nation's institutions has grown; mixed-income neighborhoods have become rarer; regional polarization has increased; and young men who are neither working nor looking for work have become more numerous and more isolated. We do less together than in the past, and we are worse off for it, economically and otherwise.

Today's hearing, along with a new report released on Monday, launches the Social Capital Project, a multi-year research effort that I have established in the Vice Chairman's office. The project will investigate the health of the bonds of family, faith, community, and work that define our lives.

An emphasis on social capital complements the economic lens through which we typically view national challenges today. Many of our ostensibly economic problems reflect the withering of our associational life. For example, the fragility of so many families today reduces upward mobility. And diminishing trust has implications for the decline in business dynamism since risk-taking requires confidence in each other and our institutions.

Economic trends in turn affect the extent to which we cooperate to achieve our desired goals. The project's inaugural report, "What We Do Together," concludes that rising affluence has reduced the economic necessity of having close ties with neighbors and traditional institutions. It also highlights the extent to which the growth in two-worker families has affected investment in social capital. These economic changes have conferred valuable benefits to be sure, but by depleting social capital they have also come with costs.

The twin pillars of economic—of American freedom—a free enterprise economy and a voluntary civil society—exist and operate within the vital space between the government and the individual where organic communities form and networks of economic opportunity and social cohesion are built.

It is my hope that the Social Capital Project will start a new conversation for our country that emphasizes social solidarity and mutual cooperation. As we face today's economic challenges, policymakers should ask how we can empower civil society, and what government should or should not do to thicken the middle layers between the individual and the State.

I will now turn to the Ranking Member, Senator Heinrich, for his opening statement, and then I will introduce our witnesses. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Vice Chairman Lee appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 36.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN HEINRICH, RANKING MEMBER, A U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO

Senator Heinrich. Thank you, Senator.

The topic of Social Capital is an important one, especially when it is used to build communities up. I worry, though, that this conversation can be used to blame disadvantaged communities for not already being successful.

It is easy to generalize about people and communities, but I believe we must resist doing that. Because otherwise, Congress, instead of building communities up, risks institutionalizing stereotypes and discrimination. It is offensive and, frankly, not constructive to blame communities for the challenges that they face today. Blame is no substitute for a strong economic foundation, and smart investments in our children and our workers. Social networks help, but investments in individuals and communities are key to building a better future and a more vibrant economy.

I think we would all agree that Congress cannot and should not force people to marry, become friends with their neighbors, or even join civic organizations or churches. We need to be both strategic and realistic about the policies that we pursue.

When I was a child, both of my parents worked. For my father, his union job helped him to earn a higher wage, and protections at work. Belonging to a union is a source of social capital and my family benefited from that. I benefited from that.

My mother, on the other hand, did not have a union job and at one point her factory schedule was three weeks on, one day off, plus overtime nearly every day. Her wage under-valued her work and under-valued her, leaving her with little time to spend building those networks.

So as we prepare to hear about the role of social capital, about ways to help working families get into the middle class, to even have the time to make community connections and shore up social capital, it is important that we not lose sight of investing in people like my mother.

Right now the deck is stacked against some and in favor of others. Children of wealthier parents start with a leg up. Good schools are increasingly concentrated in high-income areas, leaving millions of our children behind. While a college education has long been thought of as the path to the American Dream, that path is financially out of reach for far too many Americans.

As Americans we have a deep commitment to everyone getting a fair shot. To achieve that, government has a significant role to play. It must provide the essential building blocks: affordable child care and pre-K; quality K through 12 education; comprehensive health care and access to affordable post-secondary education.

We can break the cycle of poverty by simultaneously providing programs and supports to parents and their children. The two-generation approach is evidence-based. It is data-driven bipartisan policy with a history that works.

I have seen the power of 2Gen models in New Mexico with initiatives like the United Way's Early Learning Center in Santa Fe, which offers year-round full-day services for children right next to technology, employment, and social service assistance for parents under one roof.

Helping parents and children in these programs develop supportive networks is an important component of helping these families achieve success and building stronger communities. We must expand proven programs like the EITC and the Child Tax Credit that lift almost 10 million people out of poverty each year.

We need universal pre-K starting at age 3. We have long known that investments in early education boost education outcomes and

increase earnings. Government cannot and should not go it alone. In Gallup, and Carlsbad, Silver City, and throughout New Mexico it is the schools, the churches, the nonprofits, the businesses, the philanthropic groups that define the community. They are the community anchors, but government must provide the basics.

Professor Small's research on Head Start attendance reminds us that limited, inexpensive interventions can have deeply meaningful impacts. His research found that when parents of Head Start students develop networks, attendance improved. Just one example, but we can learn two important things from this research. First, that social networks can strengthen an already effective program. And second, that without that government program we would not have the foundation on which to build.

I look forward to your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Senator Heinrich appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 36.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you, Senator Heinrich. Now I would like to introduce each of our witnesses.

Dr. Robert Putnam is the Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University. He is also a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the British Academy, and a past president of the American Political Science Association. He has received a number of scholarly honors, and has written 14 books, including "Bowling Alone" and his latest book, "Our Kids: The American Dream In Crisis."

Dr. Putnam graduated from Swarthmore College where he won a Fulbright Fellowship to study at Balliol College, Oxford, and earned Masters and Doctorate Degrees from Yale University.

Dr. Charles Murray is the W.H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. He has written a number of books, including "Coming Apart," and his most recent, "By The People: Rebuilding Liberty Without Permission." His first book, "Losing Ground," has been credited as the intellectual foundation for the Welfare Reform Act of 1996.

Dr. Murray holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor's Degree in History from Harvard University.

Dr. Yuval Levin is the Hertog Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and a contributing Editor to National Review and The Weekly Standard. He is the founding Editor of National Affairs, a quarterly journal on domestic policy in politics.

He served on the White House Domestic Policy staff under President George W. Bush, and was also a Congressional staffer. He is the author of a number of books, including "The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and The Birth of Right and Left." And most recently, "The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract In The Age of Individualism."

He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science at American University and holds a Ph.D. from The Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Mario Small is the Grafstein Family Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. He has authored a number of award-winning books, including "Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Cap-

ital In A Boston Barrio," and "Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality In Everyday Life."

He is also an author of numerous articles on urban poverty and support networks, and he is currently writing a book on how people decide to whom to turn for social support.

Dr. Small holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Anthropology from Carlton College, and a Master's and Doctorate from Harvard University.

Thank you all for your willingness to be here today to testify. And with that I would like to turn to Dr. Putnam for testimony, to be followed by Dr. Levin—to be followed, rather, by Dr. Murray, Dr. Levin, and Dr. Small.

Dr. Putnam.

STATEMENT OF DR. ROBERT D. PUTNAM, PETER AND ISABEL MALKIN PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

Dr. Putnam. Thank you. Vice Chairman Lee, Senators, Members, I welcome this opportunity to discuss the topic of social capital with you, as I have done in recent years with grassroots groups in virtually every district and virtually every State represented in this entire Committee. I am sorry that there is not everybody here, because I would like to talk to them about their home districts. I have visited them and talked with people in their home districts about these issues of social capital.

Policymakers often focus on hard economic factors, ignoring softer social factors. In the last 25 years, scholars have collected hard evidence on these softer factors under the rubric of social capital, making this one of the fastest growing areas in social science.

The literature is reviewed in the excellent staff report, so I can be succinct. Social capital refers to social networks and the associated norms of trustworthiness and reciprocity. We all intuitively recognize the importance of social capital because we are all immersed every day in many such networks: our families, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, folks from church, folks from the bowling league, even someone you met last night while celebrating the Celtics victory.

Scholars have learned in recent decades just how deeply such networks influence our health, our happiness, prosperity, the safety of our streets, the productivity of our firms, the performance of our schools, and even the quality of our democracy.

To illustrate the importance of social capital, I want to focus briefly on two policy issues, the first rooted in the early stages of life, the growing opportunity gap between rich kids and poor kids in America; and the second, an unnoticed problem that will arise when the Bowling Alone generation becomes the aging alone generation.

First, the opportunity gap. As I described in my book "Our Kids," the last several decades have witnessed a growing gap between rich kids and poor kids in the resources and the opportunities they have for upward mobility and personal success. In a perfect social storm, the opportunity gap causes, including as Charles Murray

has pointed out, growing economic inequality, increasing class segregation, and the collapse of the working class family.

Social capital contributes to the opportunity gap. For example, families in the lower third of the population of all races and ethnic groups, in that part of the society the families are increasingly fractured and fragile, as illustrated in J.D. Vance's "Hillbilly Elegy."

Scholars from various sides of the political divide disagree about exactly why this has happened, the collapse of the working class family, but all sides now agree that fragile families are bad for kids.

Poor kids are also isolated from community life, from neighbors, clergy, civic associations, and even extracurricular activities like sports and music. This extracurricular gap in turn contributes to a gap in mentors, like coaches, and in soft skills like teamwork and grit, and even, eventually, differences in lifetime income, attributable to the difference—to this extracurricular gap.

This class gap in football and band and so on is new to our history, and the explanation is simple and yet shocking: pay to play. When cost-cutting school boards in response to our pressure as voters began charging parents hundreds of dollars a year for a kid to play sports, it is no surprise that poor kids dropped out.

In short, ignoring social capital has led directly to the opportunity gap. My second example is this:

Bowling Alone is leading to aging alone, and that matters a lot. Providing care for aging Americans is a growing challenge. We all recognize the massive number of Baby Boomers now retiring, but few understand that per person Boomers will enjoy much less informal elder care than their parents. Many aging Americans now rely on paid elder care like nursing homes and home health care aides, but an estimated three-quarters of all care for Americans over 65 is provided by family, friends, neighbors, and civic organizations.

Crucially, however, that statistic—three-quarters of all care—is based on the experience of the Greatest Generation, a now-vanishing cohort that had very high levels of social capital. By contrast, Boomers are now entering their sunset years with much less social capital. Compared to the previous generation as they, the previous generation, approached retirement, Boomers have roughly 12 percent fewer spouses, 36 percent fewer children, 30 percent fewer close friends, and 40 percent fewer religious and community ties of the sort the Chairman referred to—sorry, Vice Chairman.

In round numbers, in short, Boomers are entering retirement with one-third less social capital than their parents enjoyed. And that is not an academic matter. Social isolation is a strong predictor of morbidity and mortality, especially among the elderly. Less recognized is that lower social capital among Boomers compared to their parents will make it harder for Boomers to count on informal care as they age.

Consequently, the need for paid elder care will rise sharply above current expectations, not simply because there are more Boomers but because fewer of them will be able to rely on informal care. Over the coming decades, paid elder care per Boomer will on average have to double as compared with the previous generation.

Now I know this is a policy discussion, but one could imagine progressive or conservative approaches to this problem, or a combination of both, but the problem itself will not vanish. This threat to our Nation's health, both fiscal and physical, stems directly from the Bowling Alone in the 1970s, which will lead to Aging Alone in the 2020s.

As with many other public institutions, including the opportunity gap, social capital is an under-appreciated dimension of this problem.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Putnam appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 38.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Dr. Murray.

STATEMENT OF DR. CHARLES MURRAY, W.H. BRADY SCHOLAR IN CULTURE AND FREEDOM, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. Murray. I welcome the chance to testify before this Committee, and especially I welcome the chance to emphasize something in this polarized age. The staff of the Committee produced a report that I think Professor Putnam and I both agree is a really terrific report.

Professor Putnam and I are on very different points of the ideological spectrum. I consider him to be the world's greatest authority on social capital, and whereas we have some differences in policy recommendations the differences are overwhelmed by the ways in which we agree. I think that is heartening, and I hope that we can take advantage of that in dealing with this problem.

In terms of what I can add to the discussion today, I have decided to try to focus on some of the ways in which this problem is so complicated, because I think that when we talk about statistics like the falling marriage rate, or the rising drop out from the labor force by males, that it lends itself to, well, the solution is we need higher working class wages so that it's easier for people to get married. Or, we need more job opportunities and guys will come back into the labor force.

I am not saying that such solutions would have no good effects; I think they would. But the actual ways, and the actual problems reach deeply into the ways that humans are socialized into institutions such as marriage and the labor force. And a good way to get a grip on those actual problems is "Our Kids."

Bob Putnam's book that I think is just terrific, as I have said in print. It is at the heart of that book, and the reason I urge the Members of the Committee to read it, are these wonderful, beautifully told and beautifully researched stories of real people and real families. And what I admire most about the way these are told is, the narratives have not been sanitized to make them easy to deal with.

We hear the voices of the unemployed whose manufacturing jobs were exported abroad. That is a real problem. And the voices of people who quit good jobs because they did not feel like working, or who got fired because they showed up late, shirked their tasks, and got in fights with co-workers—another real problem.

We hear stories of unmarried low-income parents who are fiercely devoted to their kids, and of other parents who created children casually and walked away from them casually. If I had to pick one theme threaded throughout all of these stories, it is the many ways in which people behaved impulsively but were oblivious to what would happen to them if they made the wrong step.

This theme also appears in steroids in J.D. Vance's "Hillbilly Elegy." In many ways he describes a life history which was full of opportunity—prodigiously squandered opportunities. You read Vance's account and keep saying to yourself: Why are they behaving so destructively?

I respect Mr. Heinrich's caution that we must not blame people for things beyond their control. It is also true that the real stories of real people and real communities get very messy in these kinds of ways. It comes down to the age-old problem of getting people, especially young people, not to do things that are attractive in the short term but disastrous in the long term. And, conversely, get them to do things that are not fun right now but that will open up rewards later in life.

This is not a problem confined to any one socioeconomic class. The mental disorder known as adolescence afflicts rich and poor alike. And adolescence can extend a long time after people have left their teens.

The most common way that the fortunate among us manage to get our priorities straight—and by "fortunate among us," I am not really talking about money—is by being cocooned in the institutions that are the primary resources for generating social capital: a family consisting of married parents and active membership in a faith tradition.

I did not choose that phrasing lightly, even though I realize it pushes buttons. I am not implying that single women are incapable of filling this function. Millions of them are heroically trying to do so as we speak, nor that children cannot grow up successfully if they don't go to church.

With regard to families, I am making an empirical statement. As a matter of statistical tendencies, biological children of married parents do much better on a wide variety of life outcomes than children growing up in any other family structure, even after controlling for income, parental education, and ethnicity. And they do so, I would argue, because of the ways in which they keep adolescents from doing destructive things.

With regard to religion, I am making an assertion about a resource that can lead people, adolescents and adults alike, to do the right thing, even when the enticements to do the wrong thing are strong: a belief that God commands them to do the right thing. I am also using religion in terms of its role as a community, a community of faith, another borrowing from Robert Putnam.

For its active members, a church is far more than a place where they go to worship once a week. It is a form of community that socializes the children growing up in it in all sorts of informal ways just as the family socializes children. This is not a prelude to a set of recommendations. I do not have any.

Rather, I am just trying to argue that it is not a matter of ideology but empiricism to include that unless the traditional family

and traditional communities of faith make a comeback, the declines in social capital that are already causing so much deterioration in our civic culture will continue, and the problems will worsen. The solutions are unlikely to be political, in my view, but cultural.

We need a cultural great awakening akin to past religious great awakenings. How to bring about that needed cultural great awakening? It beats the hell out of me.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Murray appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 57.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you. Dr. Levin.

STATEMENT OF DR. YUVAL LEVIN, HERTOG FELLOW, ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER, EDITOR, NATIONAL AFFAIRS, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. Levin. Vice Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, Members, thank you very much for the opportunity to testify. And more than that, thank you for taking up this subject this morning. It is very encouraging to see the Joint Economic Committee turning its attention to the question of social capital, which I think is a crucial economic question. And I commend you and your staff for excellent work already evident in the report that you just released, and for the promise that it suggests about the Committee's continuing efforts on this front.

In my written testimony I suggest why I think this question of social capital or associational life has to be part of any discussion of the country's economic prospects, and especially of the challenges that are confronted by the most vulnerable Americans.

In these brief remarks this morning, let me say a few words about the challenges of making this a part of our policy conversations and how I think that might be undertaken responsibly.

Maybe the best thing about the report that your Committee staff has produced is that it is unabashedly diagnostic. Too often those of us who are engaged in these debates are afraid to be dismissed as political radiologists. The radiologist will look over your scans very carefully and tell you half your ribs are broken. I hope somebody can help you with that. Good luck. And move on to the next patient.

And I think many of us who study this subject often feel that way. We tend to respond to that by ending our discussions of this, or ending books and articles about it that offer a valuable diagnosis with prescriptive conclusions that are frankly often less valuable.

The characteristic book on this subject, and I genuinely do exempt present company from that description, will offer profound and subtle analysis of what has happened to American associational life and why, and then will tack on some general ideas about how tweaking various social programs might make a difference at the margins.

If the problems are as profound as we say, those solutions, although they can be valuable, are unlikely to cut it. And yet, if more comprehensive and radical reforms are needed, we do not have real evidence of what will work on a large scale. And in some cases we lack evidence even of what will work on any small scale.

Obviously, stopping a diagnosis is unsatisfying and insufficient, particularly for policymakers, but we do need to make sure that we

start at diagnosis. And we have to make sure that we do not simply see that diagnosis as an excuse to double down on policy preferences that are not actually rooted in it.

That is what happens a lot of the time, I'm afraid. Our social policy debates between the left and the right today usually amount to arguments about whether we should do more or less of what we are already doing. The left wants more and calls for increasing our investment in the model of social policy that we have. Generally speaking, the model built up around the Great Society.

The right wants less, and argues for pulling back on those investments and letting other actors fill the space. And evidence about social capital is generally just stuffed into these boxes so that some progressives will say that stronger associational lives are only possible when basic material wants are met, which is certainly true, and that it is not happening sufficiently for too many Americans. So the evidence about social capital supports the case for greater investment in the existing safety net, or the case that inequality is the root of our problems.

Some conservatives will say there are social programs that sometimes actively undermine our associational lives in the amassing of social capital by substituting for work, and family, and community, rather than reinforcing them, or by undermining personal responsibility.

These sets of arguments are both correct, up to a point, but neither is sufficient. The evidence regarding social capital can support both views, but I think it actually gestures toward a rather different view.

It is true of course that meeting basic material needs is essential, and that our society has an obligation to help those who need help doing that. But it should be clear by now that this alone will not address the deep social dysfunction that results from the loss of social capital in American life.

It is also true that there are ways in which our social policy contributes to that loss of social capital, but that does not mean that rolling back that policy will reverse the loss. More importantly, it does not mean that the past half-century of social policy has been a failure. The War on Poverty has not failed. It has dramatically reduced extreme poverty in America, and it would be a perverse reading of the evidence on social capital to suggest that we should undo that important progress against poverty.

But what the evidence does suggest is that the approach we now have to social policy is not adequate to helping revive associational life in America. It does not do a good job of either building on what works, or uprooting what does harm, and neither doing more nor doing less of it would by itself amount to a prescription that is responsive to the diagnosis when it comes to social capital.

In part, that means that we should accept that public policy in general is not going to solve the problems of associational life in America. It could do more to help. It could do less to hurt. But it will not be the core of the solution.

But that cannot be all that we say. We have to also think about how policy might help more and hurt less, and that requires us to look beyond the familiar model of our social programs and think about what genuinely different approaches might look like.

We need an approach to social policy that is rooted from the start in some understanding of the problem of social capital. And we do not have that approach, which means that we will need to seek it by some experimentation and some period of learning.

To me, for one thing that points in the direction of empowering local institutions to attempt different approaches to our foremost social problems as they present themselves in different parts of our society. That is not because we know that local works better. In some instances it may. It is because we do not know what works, and experimentation is what you do when you do not have the answers.

As my written testimony suggests, I think that this argues for some devolution of policy design, and not just policy implementation in welfare, and in labor policy, to a degree also in education and other arenas. And some work along these lines has been attempted over the years of course, so we can learn from both its successes and its failures. But above all, even more than arguing for local power, all of this argues for humility. And it argues for proper diagnosis, which has to precede any attempt at using public policy on a large scale.

And so it adds up to commending the work that you are beginning here, and again to thanking you for inviting me to participate this morning. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Levin appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 59.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Dr. Small.

STATEMENT OF DR. MARIO SMALL, GRAFSTEIN FAMILY PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

Dr. Small. Vice Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and other Members of the Committee, I thank you for the invitation. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of social capital and economic opportunities.

Social capital is something that nations can have, and something that individuals can have. A nation's social capital is its degree of connectedness, sense of community, and participation. And as you all have read, there is an ongoing debate over whether these conditions have declined in the United States over the last 50 years.

Today I will focus instead on the social capital of individuals, which is the resources that people have access to by virtue of their networks. These resources can be of many different kinds. There are three that are especially important: information, social support, and the reinforcement of norms.

To be clear, I will use an example. Consider someone who has decided to improve his health by beginning to lift weights. This person can go it alone, but having a partner on hand will provide access to the three resources:

First, information as the partner is likely to have access to different sources of information on nutrition or lifting.

Second, social support, as the partner can serve as a literal spotter to assist while pressing heavier weights.

And third, the reinforcement of norms, as the partner will be a source of motivation. You are far less likely to skip going to the gym at six o'clock in the morning if your partner is going to be there waiting. These three resources will increase the odds that the new venture will succeed.

The benefits suggested by this analogy are supported by the literature. For example, there is abundant evidence that the information available through networks helps people move up the economic ladder and get jobs. There is also evidence that the social support available through networks helps people avoid the worst mental and health consequences of major life stressors.

Having noted these benefits, I must clarify two things. First, some commentators have used the term "social capital" to refer to core values such as hard work, marriage, and education. However, "social capital" and "values" are different things.

Values are beliefs. Social capital is a tool. Just as the weight lifter is more likely to fail not because he lacks the values but because he lacks the partner, so may a highly motivated person pursuing work or education have difficulty meeting her goals because she lacks the information or support or reinforcement that is available to social networks.

Information is especially important. For example, many talented low-income students do not apply to elite colleges because they do not know that such colleges can provide grants to cover the costs of their own tuition charges. This kind of information is well known in middle class networks and easily taken for granted, but it is often missing among lower income kids.

Second, I clarify that social capital is no panacea. Often, economic resources are necessary. Just as the lifter must be able to afford the necessary nutritional supplements and new clothing and expensive gym membership, so must low-income children have access to proper nutrition and school supplies and higher quality education to have good odds of success.

Social capital alone is not enough. I will conclude my comments by focusing on the role that effective policy can have in helping people build valuable social capital. One of the best sites to do so I believe is early education programs which can be mobilized to help not only children but also their parents.

Many child care and early education programs help parents build social capital. A national survey recently found that 60 percent of mothers whose children are enrolled in child care centers made at least one new friend there, and as a result had networks of close friends more than 30 percent larger than those of statistically comparable mothers whose children are not in centers.

These networks matter for both mental and material hardships, for example. Low income mothers whose children are enrolled in centers and who made friends there had 40 percent lower odds of depression. The material hardship scores, or the extent to which they had their utilities cut off, or went hungry for lack of food, or showed other indicators of true economic difficulty, were more than 20 percent lower.

The promise of social capital has motivated early education centers to experiment with different ways of improving their work. One randomized controlled trial managed to increase Head Start

attendance by 7 percent in the winter months just by nudging parents into mobilizing their own social capital, thus maximizing their return on tax dollars already spent while also helping improve school readiness among low-income children. The intervention itself, I should say, cost almost nothing.

Improving and expanding early education have been topics of debate in recent years. I believe thinking more expansively about the role of parents may prove valuable. Parents of children are part of a unit, and social capital is a great tool through which effective policy can provide all members of the unit true access to opportunity.

I recommend that Congress explore the potential of interventions focused on social capital in contexts such as early education programs.

Thank you, very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Small appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 69.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you. I appreciate your opening statements. We will now begin five-minute rounds of questioning, and I will begin with that. Then we will alternate between Democrat and Republican Members of the Committee.

I would like to open by asking each of the witnesses a question, and this time we will start with Dr. Small and move over to Dr. Putnam.

We are trying to use this project as an opportunity to expand Congress's horizon, to look at things that Congress tends to overlook. We have metrics that Congress is constantly looking at, things like GDP, the rate of GDP growth, the percentage of GDP coming into the Federal Government through the Tax Code, and so forth. But limits on time and resources sometimes create blind spots for us as lawmakers, sometimes resulting in us not exploring perhaps as we should new perspectives on things like family stability, opioids, the decreased workforce participation rate, and so forth.

So as the Social Capital Project develops its research agenda, what are some of the issues that you would recommend that we take a look at from our vantage point as policy makers, paying special attention of course to anything that might potentially garner bipartisan support.

Dr. Small.

Dr. Small. Sure. I think it certainly makes sense. If the question is what aspects of capital should we pay more attention to beyond the economic questions that we typically pay attention to, I think one issue is paying a great deal of attention to the things that have probably declined, but also the things that have probably increased.

So there have been many—there has been substantial evidence of a decrease in certain forms of social capital, as you have all seen in the report, but there have also been new forms of community connectedness and engagement that simply did not exist 50 years ago that we now have to start measuring: The extent to which people can connect with people beyond their local communities, for example, has increased.

Some forms of volunteering, for example, have also increased. Political participation beyond your local town has increased in many

respects because the internet and social media make things possible that were not possible in the past.

I think one of the most important things to do, if we are interested in collecting believable evidence on these questions, is to make sure that the nostalgia we all tend to face for certain kinds of things does not cloud the chance of looking at the new ways in which young people are finding ways of creating social capital. I think that is going to be an important part of the conversation.

The second thing I think is also going to be an important part of it is looking not just at collective measures of social capital, and just of measures that tell us what the country as a whole is doing, or how the country as a whole has changed, but also the extent to which there are differences among individuals, among people of different class groups, or different racial groups, for example, different genders, and the extent to which they have access to the kinds of opportunities that social capital may provide.

So I think that would be the second set of issues I would look at: heterogeneity within the country, as opposed to only trends within the country as a whole.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Dr. Levin.

Dr. Levin. Thank you for the question, and I would really very much second what Dr. Small has said in a number of ways. I think first of all this kind of project has to engage in some kind of sociology of success. That is, thinking about what works, especially amid circumstances where so much is failing.

So in communities where there are profound problems, the question of how the exceptions happen, what drives them, what makes them possible, is a very important question to explore and to think about. Both because it's simply not the case that people simply live with failure. People respond to failure. And I think we in Washington are not very good at seeing the ways in which a statistical disaster is actually also home to some examples of human thriving that we need to learn from. And the ability that people have to thrive amid circumstances where social capital is absent is going to help us learn how to help other people succeed.

Secondly, I also think that the sheer diversity of the challenges people face means that policy makers in Washington have to think about how to empower Americans to help each other. We obviously have to think also about how to use public policy to help individuals in difficult circumstances. But part of what it would mean to think about social capital as both a target and a means, both an end and a means, is to look for ways in which public policy can help people help one another, by empowering community institutions through which people help each other, and seeing that those institutions are not just ways of delivering benefits. They are also ways of creating culture.

And ultimately what you find is that in the areas of life where people are not able to make decisions that are constructive for themselves, they change those habits because the culture around them changes, or because the culture around them drives them to change.

You know, I was involved when I worked in the Bush White House in an initiative to look at ways of improving marriage rates

in some communities, for example. And I would say that initiative was a failure. We tried many things. We tried it in ways that produced a lot of data, and the data showed that most of what we tried did not succeed. And by "most," I mean really almost everything.

The few exceptions involved circumstances where people are affected not by incentives that they see out of the corners of their eyes, but by cultures in which they live fully. And obviously there is a great limit on how much government can do in that respect, but I think we should look for ways to be helpful to communities that are finding ways to help their members succeed in difficult times.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Dr. Murray.

Dr. Murray. [Microphone is off.]

Vice Chairman Lee. Please hit the button so we can hear.

Dr. Murray. You have got a real problem with getting a bipartisan set of measures, because even though the scholarly end of this there is a growing consensus, I think that when I talked about the family, the traditional family and communities of faith as being major sources of social capital, I know very well that Bob Putnam and I could talk about this and find ourselves in the same page on virtually everything, not because ideologically we think families are great and religion is great, but in terms of the concept of social capital these are two huge sources of it.

And so if you were going to have an index of social capital, like you have an index of poverty, you would have to have those in there. But that would mean saying, well, actually married families are a good thing, and unmarried families are a worse thing in some measurement sense with regard to social capital, and the same thing with regard to religion. That ain't gonna be bipartisan no matter what you do.

What Bob Putnam successfully did with "Bowling Alone" was to get people of a very wide divergence of views to accept that we had a problem there. But I am going to turn it over to him right now so he can speak for himself. But he did this by having a whole lot of indicators.

So he had in the book a statement that half of all social capital is religious in origin. That is a simplification. He could say that in the book, but he could still appeal to a lot of readers because he talked about lots of other things, too.

So if you want somebody that will solve this problem for you, he is sitting to my left.

Vice Chairman Lee. Dr. Putnam.

Dr. Putnam. I am not sure whether that last comment was a friendly comment or not—that is, that I am going to solve all the problems. I will try to be telegraphic.

First, social capital is a purple concept. It encourages us to think of problems that are intelligible not just through a blue lens or not just through a red lens; it requires us to think across ideological lines.

And a lot of problems in the real world are purple problems. And as I have talked to your constituents over the last three or four years, ordinary people in America understand that problems are

not either neatly red or neatly blue. It requires a—and I am extremely sympathetic to the initiative of this Committee—but it requires a certain willingness to think in purple terms, to understand that not every problem is either just a red problem or a blue problem.

Now I will try to be brief in answer to your specific question, sir. I think that how to understand the internet, which emerged actually just after I wrote Bowling Alone, is a complicated question. And the question is: Will the internet make the problem better or worse? And the answer to that question is: Yes.

That is, it will make both better and worse, and there is a lot of debate among experts and in the literature about the way social capital is affected by the internet. The crucial idea here I think is to think in terms of alloys. An alloy is a metal that is composed of two other metals, but the mixture of the two has properties different from either one.

And most of our networks, most all of our networks are alloys. That is to say, nobody now lives solely with face-to-face ties, and nobody now lives solely with electronic ties. And so you have to ask about what are the natures of the alloys that are mixtures of social media and face-to-faceness. Not all the alloys are the same, but I am urging the Committee first of all to focus on that.

Secondly, do not go into it thinking that the internet is either the solution to all of our problems, or the root of all of our problems. But, thirdly, to think not in those dichotomous terms, either face-to-face or electronic, but rather to think about different forms of alloys.

My last point is, I do think that the Committee can make a major contribution in providing or encouraging the executive branch to provide better measures at a local level for social capital. We do have—and I am agreeing here—we do have good national data about these trends. That is what I draw on, and that is what all of us draw on. It is much harder to be able to say, as I said before I have talked to almost all of your individual constituents. I have been in Peoria, and in Decatur, and I have been in actually everybody's constituency, and at those levels there are differences in the character of social capital, but we cannot talk about them in a rigorous way because we do not have good local-area based measures of social capital.

That is not impossible; it is just not being done.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Senator Heinrich.

Senator Heinrich. Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairman.

I am going to yield for just a few seconds of my time to Senator Klobuchar. She has a meeting at the White House she needs to get to.

Senator Klobuchar. Thank you very much. Thank all of you. I have read your book, Professor Putnam, and enjoyed it. And thank you for being here today.

Today's hearing really provides a chance to look at how to build social capital and why it is important to look at policies about how we can do a better job, especially in this isolating time. As someone who reads their Twitter feed every so often, I would say it can be an isolating time with people's reactions to things.

But at the same time, as I know from my State of Minnesota, and Representative Paulson knows from our State, is that we build social capital every day. It is built in the church basements over a hotdish on Friday nights at a raffle to raise money for a good cause; at the Hmong marketplace where many in our Hmong community and others from around the Twin Cities get together to shop; or the Brian Coyle Center where many in our Somali community—we have the biggest Somalian community in the country in Minnesota—gather together; or in the spaghetti dinner on Minnesota's Iron Range.

So that is how I see us still building social capital. And now more than ever I see this isolating time of polarization, and I have actually seen more people turn out, whether it is the Jewish community center event, or an expansion of our Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul, than I have ever seen since I have been in political office.

So it is possible that people are reacting to what they hear in a good way. One troubling aspect of this hearing today, we are here to discuss a very important issue that impacts our society, and I think there are many constructive ways in which we should examine the issue of social capital. And it is our responsibility to seek a wide range of expertise.

I do want to express concern that I do not believe it is constructive to engage on this matter with individuals whose theories are drastically polarizing and have been discredited. And I will leave it at that, and I will submit my questions on this point on the record, but thank you very much.

[The questions referred to appear in the Submissions for the Record on page 85.]

Senator Heinrich. Thank you, Senator. I am going to get started with my questions. I want to start with you, Dr. Small.

We have heard some different theories today about why some people succeed, why others do not. Are you aware of any evidence that inherent genetic differences drive those economic outcomes?

Dr. Small. No.

Senator Heinrich. Would it be wise for Congress to make policy predicated on either gender or genetic or racial stereotypes?

Dr. Small. No. It would be counterproductive.

Senator Heinrich. Alternatively, would it be wise for Congress to focus on policies that invest in both people and communities, irrespective of race, religion, creed, and also irrespective of how diverse, or even how remote or rural they are?

Dr. Small. Absolutely. That is what I am hoping we do today.

Senator Heinrich. So you have done a lot of research about the benefits of investing in early childhood education—for example, Head Start. As the Congress works to invest in our Nation's children, not only because it is the right thing to do but because investing in our kids actually means investing in our collective economic future, what lessons would you hope that members of this Committee would learn?

Dr. Small. Thank you for the question, Senator. Yes, I would say a couple of things.

One is that we pay special attention to the evidence concerning the importance of early education. The evidence that both high-quality organized early education programs work, the evidence that

also from a cost/benefit perspective they are a wise investment. And the evidence that children in low-income communities both in the poorest inner city neighborhoods but also in rural parts of the country, tend to respond positively to those.

The second thing I would add is that new evidence that is emerging from actually local experiments in multiple parts of the country suggest that thinking more expansively about the potential role of social capital and improving the benefits of these early education programs suggests that we could do more, and more effectively, by thinking a little bit more broadly about such programs.

I guess the third thing I would say is that one common theme across many of these new experimental programs I have seen is the idea of no longer thinking about children and parents separately, but thinking about the family holistically. This is an issue where I found commentators on both the left and the right make a version of the same point: that if you think not just about whether you're taking care of the kid, but thinking about a child as part of a family unit with a collective, not an individual set of problems, and therefore a collective not individual set of solutions, you are likely to get far better results. And you are likely to use far better—make far better use of taxpayer dollars.

Senator Heinrich. Thank you for bringing that up, because that is one of my other particular interests in this, is the sort of two-generation approach to trying to deal with poverty. And we have seen great leadership in very diverse states from Utah, to New Mexico, and others, with that approach. And we have seen real positive outcomes from it. I have certainly seen that work in a number of my communities in New Mexico.

I have actually introduced some legislation with Senator Collins to try and increase opportunities, and get out of those silos. And I think it may have been Dr. Levin who mentioned the War on Poverty and the progress that was made in the 1960s in some of these programs. But we need to recognize where we are today. And one of the things that I think the two-generation approach does is it recognizes that many of those things are in silos. And if they are in silos and you cannot access them, then they are not actually supporting the family network.

So we will start with Dr. Small and go right across to Dr. Putnam because I know he has an interest in this, as well.

What are your thoughts on the two-generation approach and its potential for sort of weaving these two things together, of basic foundational support, along with the importance of social capital?

Actually, let's start with Dr. Putnam and then we will come back to the left.

Dr. Putnam. I think for all the reasons, I think it is a terrific idea. I think for all the reasons that you alluded to, treating just the needs of a child—and of course that is important—but thinking of the child as part of a family unit and therefore providing coaching, and all around what is often called in the field wrap-around support for the family, is a really—the evidence says that is synergistic. You get more out of combining early childhood education and family support than you would get out of either of those taken separately.

Senator Heinrich. Dr. Murray, do you have——

Dr. Murray. I am not familiar with the literature on the two-family support work, so I am really not competent to respond.

Senator Heinrich. Dr. Levin.

Dr. Levin. I think it is an important innovation in thinking about public policy to understand that one of the problems that we have had in social policy in America is that it has been overly individualistic in how it thinks about people in need. That it has tended to isolate individuals even within a family, let alone within a community, and approach them as needing resources on their own.

The fact is we are all dependent on one another. And I think any approach to social policy that recognizes that and that helps people help people who are dependent on them, that it be responsible, while also helping them meet needs, is an improvement.

I would say that it is important not to force a model from the Federal level all the way down to the local level; to be supportive of different approaches, including this kind of approach, but not to assume that one size is going to fit all in a country that is as vast as is ours.

Senator Heinrich. Dr. Small, do you have anything to add?

Dr. Small. Largely that I would agree. I think the point that philosophically it is difficult to tell people to worry more about family but to create programs that only target their kids and not the parent does not make a lot of sense.

I think also from a practical perspective what we have is a situation where there are out there very strongly skilled professionals who are specialists on children, or who are specialists on parents and workforce development, or early education, and therefore they do what they do best. I think in the absence of an outside intervention of the kind you are describing where there is an incentive for these different kinds of specialists to think about the family as a unit, it will be difficult for them to be naturally inclined to do so.

So I actually find that with the idea that you are proposing to be very promising both from a philosophical but also from a practical perspective.

Senator Heinrich. Thank you. Dr. Putnam, you have talked extensively about how weaker social networks among Baby Boomers could make their care dramatically more expensive as they age. And I have seen in my own family the importance of the interaction between being able to access health care, be it through the VA, private insurance, or Medicare, and then being able to have the social connections and the support that make life valuable.

Would cutting health care coverage, for example—you know, we saw a bill emerge from the House in the last few weeks that cuts Medicaid by I think $800 billion, if I have my figures correct—does that, how does that make those social support challenges either more or less acute?

Dr. Putnam. Thank you for that question. I first of all have to say I am not a gerontologist, so this is not a field that I—unlike some of the other stuff where I am willing to present myself as an expert, my work in this area is based just on looking at the implications for gerontology of what we already know. Namely, the Baby Boomers at every stage of their life have had just much less connection.

I think too the policy options that flow from this are pretty clear, and I do not need much explanation for me. We are going to have to spend a lot more money than we currently realize on caring for aging Baby Boomers. Not just because there are a lot of them, but because they do not have the social support that the Greatest Generation, their predecessors, had.

Whether that comes from public sources, Medicare—Medicaid, I mean, and Medicare, but Medicaid is the relevant portion because that is supporting the long-term care, or through private sources, that is a debate that both sides of this Committee are familiar with. And I do not have anything particularly to add to it, except to say the problem is real. It is not going to go away.

I think that is all I can add to the conversation.

Senator Heinrich. I am going to yield back the rest of my time so we can get to some of the other members.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Representative LaHood.

Representative LaHood. Thank you, Vice Chair Lee, for having this hearing. And I want to thank the witnesses today for your valuable testimony and for being here.

There are really two statistics that jump out when I look at the materials today. One is the statistic that shows between 1970 and 2016 the share of children in America raised by a single parent or by neither parent rose from 15 percent to 31 percent. So doubled.

And the second one is, between 1970 and 2015 births to single mothers rose from 11 percent of all births to 40 percent of all births.

In looking at both of those statistics and the societal effects and the costs that it has on our country, and I think about that in a number of ways, and I think it affects rural as well as urban, I spent 10 years as a State and Federal prosecutor and in that role as a prosecutor before every sentencing we get a presentence report with the details of the defendant we are going to sentence. And 95 percent of them read the same when it comes to early childhood or background: born into a single family home. Did not have any of that upbringing that we are used to in a conventional family upbringing. And wound up early getting involved with the criminal justice system, drugs, alcohol, and led to, you know, further crimes in the system.

And I think about the societal costs of these stark statistics: the public education system, particularly in our urban areas, how much money we throw at to increase graduation rates and drop-out rates. Not only the court system, but our jails and prisons and how they are full of kids in some ways and adults that are affected by a single-family upbringing, or no parent.

And then of course health care costs, which we do not talk enough about, but mental illness, behavioral health that we have to pay money for, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. And then of course our welfare system and how it drains on that.

And as I listen to the testimony here today on what are the remedies, what from a public policy standpoint can we look at to help stem this tide? And it is difficult to find real success stories.

And I know, Dr. Putnam, you talked about it being a purple issue. Dr. Levin, you talked about trying to increase marriage

rates, and that was a failure. And trying to have more community input.

But I guess from a public policy standpoint, sometimes throwing more money at it perpetuates the problems in many ways. And so trying to figure out, are there success stories that each of you can point to that have worked in specific areas? And are we—is the trajectory changing as we move on? Or is it going to continue? And I will start with Dr. Levin.

Dr. Levin. Well thank you for the question. It is a vitally important question. I would say a couple of things.

First of all, there are stories to tell about genuinely significant reversals in dangerous social trends. I think the example of teen pregnancy over the past 15 years is an under-appreciated and under-studied example of a genuinely disastrous cultural trend genuinely turning around in a meaningful way.

I would not say sitting here that I can give you an exact description of why and how that happened, but it certainly included some combination of bipartisan agreement about the existence of the problem, of frank discussion of ways of addressing it, ways of taking it on that made both sides of our politics uncomfortable, and ultimately a culture change that made a big difference.

Now I do not think that there is in that a model for dramatically changing rates of family formation that could have the same kind of effect, but I think that again place by place, community by community there may be something to learn there.

I would also say—and this is a challenging point to make in a way that does not diminish the significance of the problem—if you had told an American in 1950 that the rates of out-of-wedlock births would rise from 5 percent that year to almost 50 percent in 2017, and asked that person what our country would look like as a result, they would describe a country that looks much worse than our country. They would have described a hell scape that we would not recognize.

The fact is that we have dealt with this problem in ways that can help us think about what success can look like. I do not think it is possible to return to the family formation rates of the 1950s. Those were very unusual. It is not the case that that is how things always were in America until the 1960s. It was a very unusual moment in post-War America, and it is a moment that we should be careful about using as a standard and a norm in all of our cultural discussions.

People have found ways of thriving despite enormous disadvantages, including being born into broken families, which is an enormous disadvantage. I think we have a profound obligation to try to help people build stronger families for their children, and to try to help children grow up in stronger families.

We also have an obligation to deal with the reality that a lot of Americans will not grow up in intact families, and to try to find ways of allowing them to thrive nonetheless. That is not to offer solutions, right? That is an answer in search of a final sentence that resolves the problem. But I do think that we need to think realistically about what problems we are looking for solutions to, and to define that in as broad a way as we reasonably can in public policy.

Representative LaHood. Thank you.

Dr. Murray.

Dr. Murray. You asked specifically about marriage rates and out-of-wedlock birth rates and turning those around, are there any success stories?

I am not familiar with any. Also, one has to recognize the degree to which this is a class-based phenomenon; that marriage rates for those in the upper middle class are still very high. They stopped declining in the 1980s. Divorce has gone down for the upper middle class since then. Marriage is alive and well in the upper middle class, and the bottom has fallen out of it in the working class. And the statistics I used in "Coming Apart" I focused specifically on non-Latino whites for a very clear reason. I do not want people to be under any illusion this is related to ethnicity. This is an American social problem.

And at the time I was looking at those numbers, the ones for 2010 were that among white working class folks that you had 48 percent married, down from the more than 80 percent in 1960. It has been essentially a collapse. And if you go to white working class communities, or I am sure black working class communities, or Latino ones, I do not know of any examples where marriage rates have risen.

And if others on the panel have, I would love to hear it.

Representative LaHood. Thank you.

Dr. Putnam.

Dr. Putnam. Actually I agree with the preceding two speakers. The statistics you quoted are of course right. The one you probably meant to include but did not is this one about class differences, the growth in out-of-wedlock births and the growth of fragile families is entirely concentrated in the working class. And that only makes the problem worse because it means that kids from one side of the tracks are not getting the same support at home.

There is a surprising amount of consensus actually among experts here. There would not have been 10, 15 years ago, but there now is. And I think there is consensus on the following points:

One, this is happening. That is, there is a growing class gap in family formation.

Two, it is important. It does matter for the kids.

Three, everybody recognizes that there are single moms who are doing a bang-up job against big challenges. So it is not a matter of blaming the moms. But nevertheless, it is a problem.

Four, the change probably has been driven by a combination of cultural and economic factors. That is to say, you ask me, I am mostly on the left. I think there is a big cultural change that has happened, but I also think there have been big economic changes that have happened. And I think if we frame this as if we have to choose between why has this happened, is it really economics, or is it really culture, that is going to get in our way of trying to fix it.

And the last point, I think we agreed that we can think of things on the economic side that might make a difference. That is, providing EITC or there are other ways in which you could provide greater economic support to families in this situation.

But I think there is broad agreement, and you have all said that, that even though there are clear cultural causes of this, we do not know how to turn that dial except with respect to the teen pregnancy issue. It is important that we understand this. The teen pregnancy problem is—I do not want to say it is solved, but there has been a huge decline in teen pregnancy at the very same time that there has been a growth in out-of-wedlock births. How could that happen? Because most of these out-of-wedlock births are not happening to teenagers, they are happening to people, couples in their 20s and 30s. And exactly how you begin to address that is, honestly, the cultural side of that is not so clear to me.

I mean I think it would be great if we could figure out how to do that, but I do not know of any success stories at that level. And I think that is actually what I have said, most experts in this field would agree with what I have just said, I think.

Vice Chairman Lee. Representative Maloney.

Representative Maloney. Thank you.

And, Dr. Putnam, thank you. Thank you for your books.

Mr. Chairman, let me begin with a few thoughts on this hearing. Dr. Murray has rather infamously written, and I quote, "No woman has been a significant original thinker in any of the world's great philosophical traditions." End quote.

Let us think about that for a moment. It is not only grossly unfair, it is demonstrably untrue. From Hypatia the great Greek mathematician, astronomer and philosopher who was the head of the Neopelatonic School during the Byzantine Empire, to Maria Mitchell, the first woman to discover a comet, to Grace Hopper who wrote COBAL, one of the first computer programming languages, to the now-famous mathematicians from the Academy Award winning nominated movie "Hidden Figures," who helped America win the space race, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson, to Maria Mayer who won the Nobel Prize in Physics, and Speaker Ryan's all-time favorite philosopher Ayn Rand, these are just some of the lucky few, the women who defied the odds and the structural barriers to succeed in philosophy and science.

Just think about how many more could have joined their ranks. Women solve problems, cure diseases, and invent the next great thing over and over again, yet we must continually combat the stereotypes in Dr. Murray's work.

Offensive views about a woman's capabilities are wrong-headed and hold women back from their full potential. These ideas keep women out of STEM fields in schools, out of executive positions at work, out of the board room, and out of Congress.

We even see them in Presidential politics when one candidate claimed that a woman did not have, quote, "the stamina," end quote, for the Presidency. These biases are a crutch and an excuse to not address the real barriers women face in our economy, underinvestment in child care, the lack of any paid parental leave, unequal pay, and so on, and so on.

In my humble opinion, Congress should not give these ideas a platform, and our Committee should not seek to elevate offensive claims that rely on spurious evidence.

I would like to ask Dr. Small and Dr. Levin, we like to think about America on the cutting edge. But our policies hold back to-

day's working families in so many ways. New parents are not guaranteed working families paid leave for the birth of a child. We are among two nations in the world that do not provide this safety net guaranteed to our families.

Many eligible young people cannot access Head Start. Our Family and Medical Leave Act, a very important bill, but it should include other important family challenges such as conferences with teachers on a child's performance in school. And millions of low-wage workers do not have predictable schedules. They cannot even count on knowing when they are going to be working even a few days ahead of time, a situation that Senator Heinrich pointed out was a challenge his own mother confronted.

So, Dr. Small, how would addressing these policies—these are concrete policies that we could address—how could addressing these shortcomings enable America's working families to build a better, stronger social capital and social network?

Dr. Small. Congresswoman, thank you for that question. It actually provides a great opportunity to connect the prior conversation to this one.

I would like to make an important observation about the rise in the rate of birth to unmarried mothers, which is that it is not so much the case that working class parents are driving the trend. It is that upper middle class parents are the exception. In other words, it is really only among upper middle class parents where this trend has not risen.

In fact, to put this in perspective, you might remember that in the 1960s the old Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put out a report on "The Negro family: A Case of National Action" it was titled, and he pointed out that among African Americans birth to unmarried mothers were extremely high.

Well today, births among middle class whites are higher than they were to unmarried—than they were, excuse me, to African Americans at the time Moynihan was writing. It is a trend that has happened across the board. Again, not upper middle class. But there are not just upper middle class and working class people. There are lots of middle class people out there, and among the middle class the trends are high, and they are higher than they were when Moynihan sounded the alarm.

What this tells us is not that this is not an issue, but that the core problem was the lack of resources to manage giving birth as an unmarried mother, rather than just giving birth as an unmarried mother, because many middle class parents who are doing so today seem to be doing fine.

In that context, I think the point you have made about the importance of opportunities for those mothers is essential. We are unique among the developing countries in the paucity of resources and opportunities we give to mothers early and shortly after—during and shortly after the birth of their children to participate fully in the economic system.

This includes insufficient opportunities for paid leave. Also, insufficient support for full-time early education for their children. And also not fully effective or efficient enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation.

I think if you saw support for these three things, you would find that those families who choose to do what increasingly everyone is doing will find that their mothers participate as fully in the economic system as their inherent abilities would naturally allow, and in many other countries, provide them the opportunity to do so.

Vice Chairman Lee. Senator Cotton.

Senator Cotton. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this very important hearing. And thank you to our extremely distinguished panel of witnesses for appearing today, and for all the important work you have done over the years.

I would like to start with Dr. Putnam and your written testimony. On page 5 you write: "This cherished American Dream is evaporating for over 25 million children born to low-income, less-educated parents in the last three decades." A little bit later you write, "Rich kids and poor kids are now growing up in separate and unequal Americas."

That is the case across racial and ethnic lines, correct, Dr. Putnam?

Dr. Putnam. Yes, sir.

Senator Cotton. And you tell a story that I have seen with different names on it, most of us have, very poignant about Alissa and Layla. Alissa, a rich kid in Southern California whose parents can afford a fancy private school, and swimming lessons to get her into a better college, and Layla whose mother is out of work, who has to work at an entry-level job and go to a for-profit college hoping that she can get ahead. Those disparities that you write about I think we have all seen back home in our home towns and states with depressing regularity.

You go on on page 6 to say further, "Rich kids enter kindergarten almost a full year ahead of bottom-third kids and rich kids increasingly attend schools with other rich kids, and poor kids with other poor kids."

You have what you call "Scissor Graphs" on page 7 and page 8, which also tell the tale of the amount of time that richer parents, better educated parents, are able to spend time with their children and developmental time in what you call enrichment experiences like swimming lessons or summer camps, time spent together at family dinners and in extracurricular activities.

I want to explore that further with a chart that we have here, and I will orient the audience to that chart. This is real hourly wages by education. So over here (indicating) you start at 1973. It is normalized to 100 where basically everybody is the same.

And you see over time coming out to just after 2003. So this does not include continued disparities. The growth in wages or decline based on education. And you see a very strong correlation. Those with the most advanced degrees have seen the highest wage growth. College degrees nearly as high. But then here (indicating), some college but not a degree, barely any growth at all. High school graduation, a decline. Less-than-high school education, a collapse in wages.

Does this reflect what you write about in your written testimony, Dr. Putnam? Is this one of the driving causes of the decline in social capital and social trust among more stressed families and stressed communities?

Dr. Putnam. Yes, sir. It is not the only cause, but it is an important background factor. And then, if I can add——

Senator Cotton. Yes, please.

Dr. Putnam [continuing]. What the work that I summarized in my testimony that I wrote about in "Our Kids" suggests is the translation of that graph into the scissors graph in individual families means that increasingly family status is inherited. It is passed from—increasingly, and that makes it even worse.

Senator Cotton. And is that because in part divisions along educational and class-based lines become more self-reinforcing and perpetuating than older ethnic, or racial divisions did in the mid-20th Century?

Dr. Putnam. Yes, sir.

Senator Cotton. You write a little bit further in your testimony on page 10 about "areas of interest that were left aside: successful economic and job development policies in communities are likely to have important positive effects on the local opportunity gap, but assessing such strategies was outside the scope of our expertise."

So the point there would be finding some way for people who have less than a college degree to once again partake in the American Dream that increasingly is out of touch for them?

Dr. Putnam. Yes, sir. Can I add just two quick qualifications? One is, I used, quickly, rich and poor, but I was not comparing Bill Gates' kids to homeless kids. I was comparing kids coming from the upper third of American society—that is, kids coming from college-educated homes. My grandchildren are in that sense "rich kids," although they are not rich. And I was not comparing them to the poorest of the poor. I am comparing them to what we used to call the working class. That is, people who did not get past high school.

So I know you understand this, but I do not want the quick terms "rich" and "poor" to get misunderstood. We are talking about a basic——

Senator Cotton. I come from Darnel, Arkansas, where $18,000 makes me a millionaire.

Dr. Putnam. Yes. Secondly, the passage of my testimony that you, written testimony that you referred to, came from a report that I chaired that was produced by 50 experts from across disciplines and across party lines and so on. We tried to figure out how can we begin to narrow the opportunity gap?

And I have no doubt that local economic development strategies of the sort that you all explored in your previous hearing a month ago are important.

I also think, however—and we did not talk about those here, but we did talk about a lot of ways in which individual kids coming from disadvantaged backgrounds could be helped to get back onto what we call "on ramps," things like apprenticeship programs, and community college reforms and so on that would enable poor kids, kids coming from the bottom part of that graph, themselves to move up the ladder.

That blockage, increasing blockage of circulation upward is I think a really grave problem for America.

Senator Cotton. Thank you very much for those answers and the testimony, Dr. Putnam. And my apologias to other witnesses. My time expired. But I do want to just conclude by saying, to me

one of the most important policy challenges we face as a Congress is to help find a way to increase the wages of people in our country who do not have college degrees, or who do not have advanced degrees.

I would submit one of the easiest policy levers that we have is our immigration policy, to reorient our immigration policy towards supporting higher skilled workers as opposed to the current policy which is heavily skewed towards unskilled or lower skilled workers which directly competes with the workers in this area here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you.

Representative Beyer.

Representative Beyer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank all of you for coming to be with us today.

As we engage in the conversation on social capital, I believe it is important that we remember that racism in our society is still very real. Just this weekend Alt-Right leader Richard Spencer, whose headquarters are right down the street from my house, led two white supremacist rallies, one by torchlight, in Charlottesville, Virginia, my own Commonwealth.

The United States Congress itself has a long and ugly history on matters of race and gender. We are reminded of this every day as we walk past statues of by-gone bigots and misogynists. It is also worth remembering that those racist luminaries whose views and policies which were rejected by all 535 Members of Congress, often turn to pseudo-science to justify hatred and exploitation.

Cognizant of this history, we would hope that we would do everything in our power to make a clean break with that foul part of our legacy, as opposed to dressing it up in new clothes and returning it to these marble halls.

Vice Chairman Lee, I am fascinated by the stated topic of this hearing today, and I found your past comments on social capital very valuable. But as I sincerely looked forward to discussing this issue in depth with Dr. Small, Dr. Levin, and Dr. Putnam, but I am dismayed that instead we are creating a forum for the discussion of critical economic issues in the best traditions of this Committee, the decision to invite Charles Murray risked turning this hearing into a sideshow.

I cannot imagine, Senator, that a man of your intelligence and political acumen was unaware of the meaning and consequences of inviting Charles Murray. I will note that this seems no accident that Chairman Tiberi has taken the unorthodox step of abdicating this hearing to you, and that many of your Republican colleagues have chosen to avoid this hearing altogether.

I am aware that arguments about free speech are often offered when defending invitations made to Dr. Murray, but I want to be clear: This has nothing to do with the First Amendment. The Constitution guarantees his right to write and say and publish whatever he wishes, but there is no Constitutional right to testify before a Congressional committee. And I do not believe that this Committee's time and resources should be used to burnish his reputation.

After all, this is unconstrained exercise of his Constitutionally protected right of free speech that gave him his toxic reputation in the first place.

Dr. Small, I found your testimony and your scholarship interesting, and I hope we have time to discuss it later in future depth, but I think we have to address the elephant of bigotry in the room. Can you give me your professional opinion of "The Bell Curve" as a matter of scholarship?

Dr. Small. It's not a very good book. There are many reasons I could offer. I do not know how much time you have, Congressman. If you would like a longer answer, I would be happy to provide it.

Representative Beyer. Well let me phrase it a little differently. What is your opinion of the utility of a book that argues that African Americans are born with lower IQs than White Americans? That there is a racially based genetic difference in IQ? Can this really be a guide for policymakers?

Dr. Small. Not a very effective one, no.

Representative Beyer. Let me move on, then.

Dr. Putnam, I am in the heart of the Baby Boom. And at least the culture I was raised in, which was pretty mixed, like the one that you write about in your book, your most recent book, but we all went to church. We were all in the Boy Scouts, Little League, summer camp, dinner together at six o'clock.

How come we don't have any friends? And why do we have fewer friends and fewer spouses and fewer children? Not the kids that are 25 and 30, but the ones that are 55 and 65?

Dr. Putnam. Thank you for that question. I have spent a lot of time in the book building room, which was written now 20 years ago, trying to understand why this had happened. And I teased out a variety of things that contributed to that, things that were happening in the years when you were growing up. Suburbanization, for example, is part of the problem.

Television, I thought, was a big part of the problem because it privatized our leisure time. But then there was a big, unexplained part of why it happened. That is, there is clearly a big difference between the generation before the Boomers, that is, what other people call the Greatest Generation, who had very—sort of the parents of the Baby Boomers, had very, very high levels of social capital in every respect that we are talking about here: more family stability, more community involvement, more friends, and so on, than the Boomers.

But why that is was a puzzle to me, and it is actually a bigger puzzle now. And the easy thought would be to think well it was World War II that created that sense of civic obligation, solidarity, and so on, and I think there is something to that. Forgive me now for alluding to coming attractions in response to that question. I am now at the moment up in the woods of New Hampshire trying to finish a book on that question: Why? Because it had not been happening forever.

In the previous half of the 20th Century we were getting more and more connected. And then sometime in the 1960s there was a turning, and we began to be less and less. All of those things.

And why that it is is still a mystery to me. When I finally crack the mystery I will finish the book and then I will be glad to come back and testify. I am sorry not to be helpful in the answer to that question.

Representative Beyer. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Vice Chairman Lee. Senator Peters.

Senator Peters. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you calling this hearing.

But before I begin my questioning, I just want to briefly address a troubling aspect of this hearing, which we have heard from some of my other Members as well. Essentially we are here to discuss a very, very serious and valid issue in American society, the issue of building social capital in our communities. And I believe that many people on this dais today would agree that there is both declining trust in the institutions and a declining trust between fellow citizens.

And we as lawmakers will play a very important role to help bridge these divides. However, before us today we have a witness who serves no purpose other than to bring divisiveness to this body. And while I am sure all of us here believe deeply in freedom of speech and expression, as well as the need for Congress to seek a wide range of opinions and expertise, a witness who has written extensively to promote racist and sexist stereotypes is a needless distraction from what we need to be doing here.

To have someone who holds these views elevated alongside actual policy experts before us today is disrespectful to our other witnesses and members of the Committee in the important topics we have to discuss.

So with that, I would like to take a look, a very broad look at what we are facing in this country that I am very concerned about. And that is, obviously declining social capital, but I look at it as just declining trust; that we are seeing this erosion of trust in our society that I think has very ominous implications for the democracy that we all love, and the Republic that we cherish here in the United States.

And I have seen that trust over the years of public service that I have had. I was a State legislator for a number of years. Then I got out of politics and loved being out of politics for a while. And then when I came back in 2009 in Congress and started holding town hall meetings, this was a period of a few years between those two experiences. The reaction that I got from folks, the vitriol, the anger, the belief in issues irrespective of facts, was pretty remarkable in that time period.

And we have continued to see it go forward. And I just give an example. During the health care debate in 2009 as we were debating the Affordable Care Act, I had town hall meetings, and some of my colleagues are having town hall meetings today, dealing with the opposite side of that issue, but I remember people screaming and hollering, not wanting to trust any statements that were made.

I would even put statements on the board with the actual language of the bill, word for word, that you could get from any source, and people would scream, "You're lying! You're lying!" And I say, "These are the facts."

And it seems now that we have gone to a world where facts do not matter; that we are in a post-truth world; that all news, if it is not news that people like, then it must be fake news. If you do not like judicial opinions, it is not because you do not agree with the judicial thinking behind the judge, it is because the judge is a

"so-called judge," or because of the ethnic background of the judge and cannot be critical.

This erosion of trust that we are continuing to see, and seems to be accelerated particularly by particular political leaders who exploit that, I think has very ominous implications for the future of our country.

So if our panelists—let's start with Dr. Putnam. Talk a little bit about what you are seeing as an erosion of trust broadly, and what you think that means for us going forward. And these are not issues that are going to be easy to solve as legislators, and be able to solve with any one particular Federal policy. You have talked about many policies here today, which are all great. But this is something much bigger than all of that. And we are not just seeing it in the United States. We are seeing it in Europe. We are seeing the kinds of movement, the kind of post-truth, post-order kind of movements around the world now. In fact, at the Munich Security Conference that I was at, one of the themes was how do we live in a post-truth world?

How do we change that, Dr. Putnam?

Dr. Putnam. Thank you for the question. It is obviously a fundamental one facing our whole country these days. But it is important to understand—I said "these days," but it is important to understand that this trend, the trend in declining trust, and I would say trustworthiness too, and reciprocity, and mutual esteem, just being nice to one another, that trend goes back a long way. That did not begin in 2008. It did not begin in 2016. Pick your date, your political date. It didn't begin then. It has been going down for a long time.

And I do not mean that you did, but a lot of commentators are talking about that and want to put the blame on some particular political person or ideology or moment——

Senator Peters. And I do not want to do that.

Dr. Putnam. I know that you don't, and I am insistently wanting to be purple here. This is not caused by particular political actions.

If I can be a little academic for a moment—that's what I am—it is important to distinguish, as I lay out in my testimony, between two different kinds of social capital. Social ties that link us to other people like us—and that is called bonding social capital—and social ties that link us to people unlike us, and that's called bridging social capital.

So my ties to other white male elderly Jewish professors, that is my bonding social capital. And my ties to people of a different generation, or a different race, or a different religion, or a different political party, that is my bridging social capital. I am not saying bridging good/bonding bad. Because if you get sick, the people who bring you chicken soup will represent your bonding social capital. But we need a lot of bridging social capital. Democracy needs a ton of bridging social capital. America has in the past been pretty decent about having bridging social capital. Sorry for the jargon. It just means you have good friends who do not share everything about you.

There has been a collapse in bridging social capital in America. And part of that is because of this growing physical segregation

that Charles Murray has talked about. We are not even living near other people who have different views from us.

I think that is the right diagnosis. How to change that is a complicated problem. I could talk a lot about specific policy things, but actually I think we have to understand that is the fundamental problem. We are just pulling apart as a society, and not just with respect to who shows up at town meetings, but with respect to our daily lives.

Senator Peters. Dr. Small. Dr. Levin. What about bridging capital? What do we need to do?

Dr. Small. So I guess I would—thank you, Senator. The first thing I would say is I would agree, first of all, that trust in government is down. And also trust in media and news from multiple sources, communication sources, is also down. And as you all know, political polarization is also up.

In terms of sort of what to do, I guess part of the way I would think about this question is in terms of the old saying about sunlight being the greatest disinfectant. I think trust in government needs an increase in transparency.

While it may not reverse the long-term secular trend Dr. Putnam just referred to, it would certainly make a difference.

I think strong support from the Federal Government for science and scientific research that is impartial and objective would also slowly begin to restore faith in certain institutions of government.

So I agree that these problems are longer lasting than any single individual or set of people, but I guess I would have a more optimistic view about the potential for short-term actions that are in fact within the power of the Congress to begin to chip away at the distrust in some of our core institutions.

Dr. Levin. Thank you, Senator, for the question. I think it is a very important facet of this set of trends that Dr. Putnam and Dr. Murray have described. And I just think Dr. Murray's very important book "Coming Apart" is one way of understanding how this has happened.

To me one way of thinking about an approach to rebuilding trust is to think about how trust is built. And trust is largely built interpersonally. It is not built at a national level all at once, generally speaking. It is built between people. And I think that for us to build up more trust in our political life would require us to allow more of our political life and more of our public policy conversations to happen at the level where people meet each other face to face.

And that suggests allowing more power to flow through local institutions, and to flow through community institutions. That is a very general answer. It is not particular policy formula for addressing this problem, but it seems to me that it would help us to turn down the temperature in Washington some so that we do not think of our politics as an endless fight to the death. And it would allow us to speak to each other face to face in ways that make it difficult to treat each other as simply caricatures.

It is not always impossible to treat as caricatures people who are sitting right in front of you. I think it happens all the time. I think it is happening now in some respects. But I do think that it is harder, and that ultimately if we allow meaningful policy discus-

sions to happen at levels where people can participate directly, they may be a little more likely to be drawn in. But, you know, that is an answer at the margins and I would not pretend that it is a solution to the problem simply.

Vice Chairman Lee. Senator Cruz.

Senator Cruz. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for being here. Thank you for testifying. I appreciate your coming before this Committee.

Dr. Murray, in your testimony you came to the conclusion that part of the solution for the many challenges we face is likely to be less political and rather cultural. Could you elaborate on this point? And in particular, give your opinion of the importance of strong families, and faith, and community life towards improving social capital?

Dr. Murray. I am basically going to second what Bob Putnam said earlier, that if we gathered people together 20 years ago on issues such as is religion really important social capital? Is the family, the traditional family really important, there would have been a huge divide depending on the political predilections of the people we are talking about.

We have made progress on those fronts. And so now, I am not speaking as a person of faith, I am an agnostic actually, although I am wavering in my unbelief, and I have been divorced. So in all of those ways, I am not speaking as a "True Believer" in the institutions of family and faith. I am speaking as a social scientist, as Robert Putnam is, saying this thing called social capital is absolutely crucial to the way that a free society works.

It has been the signature of American exceptionalism, actually, from the time of Tocqueville, on through the rest of the 19th Century and into the 20th Century. The way that American communities worked was different from the way communities worked anywhere else in the world. And the reasons we behaved differently are captured in "social capital" as Robert Putnam has described it.

And, that is going down the tubes. And it is going down the tubes in large part, not entirely but in large part because the institutions of family and of faith have deteriorated. So once again I have stated the problem. The progress consists of the much greater consensus that we have now than we had before. That does not get us any closer to a solution, with one glimmer of hope.

The United States has had at least three, and maybe four, religious Great Awakenings, depending on which historian you read, and they had enormous consequences. There was one in the 18th Century. There were two in the 19th Century. Maybe one in the 1970s. They had enormous consequences for the polity as a whole, and they also came out of nowhere. They coalesced. They had enormous impact, and you really could not see it coming.

In a way the Civil Rights Movement reflects the same kind of phenomenon where the Civil Rights Movement really got going in the mid-1950s and by 1964 we had the Civil Rights Act.

So if the United States has been able to turn culturally on a dime when the people sensed that things had gone badly wrong before, it is not inconceivable to me that it will do so again. And I can go no further in being helpful about how that might happen.

Senator Cruz. Dr. Putnam, would you care to elaborate or amplify on any of those themes?

Dr. Putnam. No. As we have said repeatedly, with respect to the importance of communities of faith and families, I think there is broad consensus among the experts. There is not broad consensus about why the problem has happened. That is, there are different views even probably among us about exactly why the family has collapsed, and exactly why people have turned away from communities of faith.

And also I think probably we all agree it is not just those two institutions. Those are ones that Charles has emphasized, and I agree with that, but it is also true of Rotary Clubs and bowling leagues and many, many other examples of social capital.

If I may, Senator, I would like to piggyback on some comments that other people have made that I agree with, actually. I do think that this problem, if we reverse engineer, if it is 2020 and we have begun to turn this around, the first signs will be at the State and local level around America. That is where America has in the past fixed its problems.

And it involved and included exactly the period of the turn of the 19th to the 20th Century when there was another great religious fervor during that period, but not only that. It was also the period where labor unions got started. It was a period when most service organizations, Kiwanis, and Rotary, and keep going on. It was a period in which there were grassroots solutions to problems very much like the ones we face now.

I give as one example, in response to the growing class gap then, in 1910, Americans in small towns in the heartland invented the high school. The high school that is free education for everybody in town, all kids in town, was not invented by—or if God did it, this is how He did it—in small rural towns, actually.

Rich folks who had already sent their kids to private secondary education, boarding schools or something, became convinced that other people's kids should also have access to four years of secondary education. It turned out to be the best decision we've ever made because that, providing all kids in town with these supports, on the one hand raised the total productivity of the American labor force so much that that single decision when it spread nationally accounts for most of American economic growth throughout the 20th Century, and it leveled the playing field.

Now I am not trying to say—please do not misunderstand me—that the high school, or maybe even any educational reform, is the solution to our problems now. I am trying to say the process by which we got there was by ordinary folks in ordinary towns where they were meeting face to face, and there was a lot of public division then—I am talking about 1900, 1910, big political turmoils, but people in face-to-face communities were able to put that aside and say, okay, so let that noise go on, how can we fix things here?

My hope actually that we could begin as a country to turn this around is that as I go around the country talking to people, and especially in local communities, there is a lot, at the grassroots a lot of hope that things could begin to happen.

Now will all the problems be completely solved at the local level? Absolutely not. We are going to need—at some point there are

going to be some successes that come out of that period of new experimentation, and then we are going to say, okay, that turns out to be really great. Let's do that every place.

So I am not saying that all these problems in the end are going to be solved at the national level—at the local level without national policies, but I am saying that that is where I think I would look for opportunities for making real progress outside the—to use language I used earlier—to look for purple solutions to this problem, not just red or blue solutions.

Senator Cruz. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Lee. Thank you, Senator Cruz. I want to thank each of our witnesses today. We decided to hold this hearing because it is on an important topic, and because it is such an important topic we sought to assemble four of the top experts in the entire country on this issue. And that is exactly what we did.

This panel would have been incomplete without any one of you, and I am grateful to each of you for being here and for your willingness to reach out and identify issues that have gone unaddressed for too long, that have not been always socially popular, that have not always been on the cutting edge of getting news. They sometimes do get news, but perhaps not in the ways that anyone had intended at the outset.

I appreciate your willingness to be here today and to inform us, and for your academic integrity and your objective, which is to identify issues that too often go unaddressed and are often ignored in our quest to address other more sexy, more popular, more palatable issues.

These are difficult questions, and I deeply appreciate your willingness to shed light on them for our Committee. The record will remain open for five business days for any Member who would like to submit questions for the record.

The hearing is adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., Wednesday, May 17, 2017, the hearing was adjourned.)

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, VICE CHAIRMAN, JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

- Our Nation, today, faces very real economic challenges. As we heard during our Committee's hearing, last month, economic growth during the recovery has been meager and uneven. The U.S. economy has become less dynamic and innovative in recent decades. We miss the strong productivity growth America enjoyed in the mid-twentieth century and the unusually large wage gains it brought.
- However, in historical and comparative perspective, most Americans enjoy unprecedented material living standards. Our economic problems often take the form of unsatisfactory rates of improvement; we are growing richer less quickly than we did when we were poorer.
- Nevertheless, many Americans—poor, middle class, and wealthy—feel that something is amiss. It is a feeling that cannot be reduced to economic anxiety. Rather, there is a sense that our social fabric is fraying.
- And these concerns are reflected in objective measures of family and community health. To cite just a few of the trends that may be grouped under the rubric of "social capital": marriage and churchgoing have declined; distrust of the Nation's institutions has grown; mixed-income neighborhoods have become rarer; regional polarization has increased; and young men who are neither working nor looking for work have become more numerous and more isolated. We do less together than in the past, and we are worse off for it, economically and otherwise.
- Today's hearing, along with a new report released on Monday, launches the Social Capital Project, a multi-year research effort I have established in the Vice Chairman's office. The project will investigate the health of the bonds of family, faith, community, and work that define our lives.
- An emphasis on social capital complements the economic lens through which we typically view national challenges today. Many of our ostensibly economic problems reflect the withering of our associational life. For example, the fragility of so many families today reduces upward mobility. And diminishing trust has implications for the decline in business dynamism, since risk-taking requires confidence in each other and our institutions.
- Economic trends, in turn, affect the extent to which we cooperate to achieve our desired ends. The project's inaugural report, "What We Do Together," concludes that rising affluence has reduced the economic necessity of having close ties with neighbors and traditional institutions. It also highlights the extent to which the growth in two-worker families has affected investment in social capital. These economic changes have conferred valuable benefits, but by depleting social capital, they have also come with costs.
- The twin pillars of American freedom—a free enterprise economy and a voluntary civil society—exist and operate in the vital space between the government and the individual where organic communities form and networks of economic opportunity and social cohesion are built. It is my hope that the Social Capital Project will start a new conversation for our country that emphasizes social solidarity and mutual cooperation. As we face today's economic challenges, policymakers should ask how we can empower civil society, and what government should or should not do to thicken the middle layers between the individual and the State.
- I now turn to Ranking Member Heinrich for his opening statement, and I'll then introduce the witnesses. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN HEINRICH, RANKING MEMBER, JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

The topic of social capital is an important one, especially when it is used to build communities up.

I worry, though, that this conversation could be used to blame disadvantaged communities for not being successful.

It's easy to generalize about people and communities. But we must resist doing that.

Because it is offensive to use this platform here in Congress to promote the institutionalizing of stereotypes or discrimination. It is offensive, and frankly not constructive, to blame communities for the challenges they face.

There is no substitute for a strong economic foundation and smart investments in our children and workers. Social networks help, but investments in individuals and communities are key to building a better future and a more vibrant economy.

I think we'd all agree that Congress cannot force people to marry, become friends with their neighbors, or join civic organizations or churches. We need to be both strategic and realistic about the policies we pursue.

When I was a child, both of my parents worked.

For my father, his union job helped him earn a higher wage and protections at work. Belonging to a union is a source of social capital, and my family benefited from that.

My mom, on the other hand, didn't have a union job. Her schedule was three weeks on with one day off for a wage that undervalued her and her work, leaving her with little time to spend building networks.

So as we prepare to hear about the role of social capital, about ways to help working families get into the middle class—to even have the time to make community connections and shore up social capital—it's important that we not lose sight of investing in people like my mom.

Right now, the deck is stacked against some and in favor of others.

Children of wealthier parents start with a leg up. Good schools are increasingly concentrated in wealthier areas, leaving millions of children behind.

While a college education has been long thought of as a path to the American Dream, that path is financially out of reach for many Americans.

As Americans, we have a deep commitment to everyone getting a fair shot. To achieve that, government has a significant role to play.

It must provide the essential building blocks –affordable child care and early learning, quality K–12 education, comprehensive health care and access to affordable post-secondary education.

We can break the cycle of poverty by simultaneously providing programs and supports to parents and their children. The two-generation approach is evidence-based, data-driven, bipartisan policy that works.

I've seen the power of 2-gen models in New Mexico. Initiatives like The United Way's Early Learning Center in Santa Fe which offers year-round, full-day services for children right next to technology, employment and social service assistance for parents. All under one roof.

Helping parents and children in these programs develop supportive networks is an important component of helping these families achieve success—and building stronger communities.

We must expand proven programs like the EITC and the child tax credit that lift almost 10 million people out of poverty each year.

We need universal pre-K starting at age 3. We have long known that investments in early education boost education outcomes, and increase earnings.

Government cannot—and should not—go it alone.

In Gallup, Carlsbad, Silver City and throughout New Mexico, it's the schools, churches, nonprofits, businesses and philanthropic groups that define a community. They are the community anchors.

But, government must provide the basics.

Dr. Small's research on Head Start attendance reminds us that limited, inexpensive interventions can have meaningful impacts.

His research found that when parents of Head Start students developed networks, attendance improved.

Just one example. But we can learn two important things from this research: first, that social networks can strengthen an already effective program. And second, that without that government program we wouldn't have the foundation on which to build.

I look forward to your testimony.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARGARET WOOD HASSAN

- Vice Chair Lee, and Ranking Member Heinrich.
- I want to begin by expressing my disappointment that my colleagues across the aisle have chosen to give a platform to a man who has peddled deeply offensive and thoroughly discredited theories questioning the intelligence of women and racial minorities.
- Mr. Murray's work relies upon twisting statistics to argue that women and minorities are intellectually inferior as a matter of genetics—and it has no place in the important discussion before this committee today on social capital.

Draft of May 16, 2017

Hearing on the State of Social Capital in America

May 17, 2017

Robert D. Putnam
Malkin Professor of Public Policy
Harvard Kennedy School

What is social capital?[1]

The central premise of the social capital approach is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other [that is, norms of reciprocity]. The term "social capital" encompasses not just warm, cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected and often for bystanders as well. That is, social networks have both internal and external consequences.

Examples of social capital include neighbors informally keeping an eye on one another's homes; a tightly knit community of Hassidic Jews trading diamonds without having to test each gem for purity; barn-raising on the frontier; and exchanges among members of a cancer support group. Social capital can be found in families, friendship networks, neighborhoods, churches, schools, bridge clubs, civic associations, and even bars. Under what circumstances internet-based networks have the same benefits as face-to-face networks is a matter of considerable scholarly and public debate, but because that debate is still rapidly evolving, I eschew any summary of it in this testimony.

Why is social capital important?

A growing body of hard-nosed literature over the last several years shows that social capital helps provide many important individual and social goods. Individuals who are better connected socially are healthier and happier, find better jobs, live longer. Communities with higher levels of social capital are likely to have higher educational achievement, better government performance, faster economic growth, and less crime. In places with greater social connectedness, it is easier to mobilize people to tackle problems of public concern (a hazardous waste facility, a neighborhood crime problem, or building a community park, to name only a few examples), and easier to arrange things that benefit the group as a whole (a child-care cooperative among welfare mothers or a micro-lending group that enables poor people to start businesses or an effective neighborhood watch group).

However, not all social capital is positive. Just as some forms of human capital (like knowledge of chemistry) can be used for destructive purposes (like building a bomb), so too some forms of social capital (like the KKK or Al-Qaeda) can have bad social consequences. Fortunately, malevolent uses of human and social capital are relatively rare, which is why we continue to teach chemistry in public schools and why we should continue to try to build social capital.

Similarly, not all social capital is equally useful for all purposes. Just as two different forms of physical capital (a screwdriver vs. a hydroelectric dam) are useful for different purposes, so two different forms of social capital (friends who gather at the local bar vs. the local bar association) serve different functions.

What are the different types of social capital?

I won't try to summarize all the different types of social capital, but as an indication of some of the ways in which social capital varies, some social ties stem from informal networks (ordinary socializing, workplace ties, relationships with neighbors, personal support networks) and some from formal networks, such as being a member of an organization. Formal organizations consist of both private-minded organizations (primarily designed to produce fun or fellowship, like a choral society or a softball league) and public-minded organizations (designed to tackle an issue of public concern, like a crime watch group or a community service organization). The social ties can be analyzed both according to the strength of those ties (with strong ties being ones that are regularly used, where the individuals consider each other to be very close friends, and who often provide personal support to each other) and weak ties (where the ties are used only occasionally and tend to be used more for the flow of information). Similarly, the ties can be analyzed as to whether they are *bridging* social capital (that bring individuals together with others who are unlike them, by race, class, ethnicity, education, religion, age, gender, and so on) or whether ties are primarily *bonding* (that bring individuals together with others like them). Most groups are bridging in some ways and bonding in others: the Knights of Columbus is bonding in terms of religion and gender but bridges across class and income. In America religious communities constitute a particularly abundant form of social capital, both bonding and bridging. By some estimates, religious communities constitute up to half of all social capital in the country.

How does social capital work?

Social capital works through multiple channels:

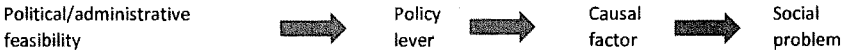
- Information flows (e.g. learning about jobs, learning about candidates running for office, exchanging ideas at college, etc.) depend on social capital.
- Norms of reciprocity (mutual aid) rely on social networks. Bonding networks that connect folks who are similar sustain particularized (in-group) reciprocity. Bridging networks that connect individuals who are diverse sustain generalized reciprocity.
- Collective action depends upon social networks (e.g., the role that the black church played in the Civil Rights movement), although collective action also can foster new networks.
- Broader identities and solidarity are encouraged by social networks that help translate an "I" mentality into a "we" mentality.

Isn't social capital too diverse to be captured in one term?

Capital is an abstract concept that encapsulates huge diversity. Economists initially debated whether you could talk about physical capital (which covers everything from a hammer to a computer to an automobile assembly plant). Similarly, human capital covers everything from piano lessons to a vocational course in cooking or automotive repair, to a graduate degree in Philosophy, and covers education of widely differing quality. So, too, does social capital cover a wide diversity of relationships: a team at the workplace, conversations with one's neighbors, relationships with the teachers of one's children, an alumni network, people you volunteered with a couple of times. The point in all these cases (physical, human, and social capital) is that these underlying attributes can have real value to society: Someone embedded in social networks that foster reciprocity can be more effective than someone who is not in such networks, the same way as someone possessing physical or human capital can be more productive than that same person without this physical or human capital.

How can we identify policy "solutions" to social problems?

When approaching a social or policy problem, moving from cause to cure is not simple. In fact, policy-makers need to make a series of calculations as they consider alternative policies. The following chart helps us understand and frame these calculations:



Identifying an important cause of a problem (like the opportunity gap discussed below) is merely the first step. The next step is to identify some efficacious policy lever that could influence that cause. For example, family instability is generally agreed to be an important cause of the opportunity gap, but most experts across the ideological spectrum agree that it has proved hard to identify a "marriage promotion" policy that can reliably increase family stability. In other words, finding an important cause doesn't guarantee that we know how to fix the problem.

But even identifying a powerful policy lever that can alter an important cause of the problem does not end our search, because we also need to consider the political and administrative feasibility of that policy. For example, the extreme isolation of low income students in low income schools is another well-established cause of the opportunity gap. And in this case, careful evaluation of a program of cross-district busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, showed that classroom integration can significantly raise the test scores of poor students without harming the scores of their rich classmates. Sounds like a terrific win-win: an efficacious policy to alter an important cause of the opportunity gap. However, despite these results, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg integration plan proved very controversial among suburban parents. The school board that had instituted the program was thrown out at the next election, and the successful integration policy was reversed.

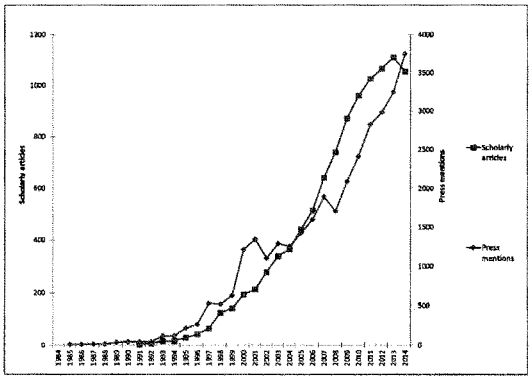
This three-part policy analysis calls attention to the fact that in looking for ways to increase social capital, we should not be looking for perfection at any single stage, but rather looking for a policy initiative that might be reasonably feasible and reasonably efficacious in altering a reasonably important causal factor. We must weigh causality, efficacy, and feasibility all at once. What is politically or administratively feasible may well vary from community to community and may change over time, so policies cannot be mindlessly transferred from one to another, but lessons from one community about causal importance and policy efficacy may be highly relevant to other communities.

Conclusion

Although the first known use of the term "social capital" in its contemporary sense goes back at least a century to the work of L.J. Hanifan, state superintendent of rural schools in West Virginia, its use in both social science and public discourse has exploded in the last 25 years, as shown in the following chart. In 1992 the term appeared in the scholarly literature roughly once every two or three *years*, but nowadays that frequency has been expanded to one citation every two or three *hours*. That exponential increase across many, many disciplines—from Incan history to evolutionary biology among dwarf deer in the Hebrides—has ranked social capital studies among the most rapidly growing fields in all of social science.

Social capital is a "purple" concept, in the sense that its usefulness cuts across conventional partisan and ideological lines. It is particularly appropriate for "purple" public problems—that is, problems that are best examined through a combination of red (conservative) lenses and blue (progressive) lenses. In my remaining remarks, I want to illustrate this usefulness by discussing two important public policy issues—one focused on the early stages of life and one from the later years.

The growth of scholarly and press references to "social capital"



Example 1: Closing the Opportunity Gap: Social Capital in the Early Years of Life

From the very first words of our founding document as a nation – "we believe ... that all men are created equal"—Americans' most widely shared value has been the principle of equality of opportunity. That is, how well a child does in life should depend on his or her God-given talents and hard work, and should not depend on what his or her parents did or didn't do.

To be sure, American realities have often fallen short of our ideals. At the beginning, we did not mean "all" men, but all white men, and we did mean men (not women). But those deviations from the egalitarian promise of the Declaration of Independence were increasingly recognized as anachronistic, and in the ensuing years we've gradually moved toward a more inclusive interpretation of the promise. As Martin Luther King said at the 1963 March on Washington, "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir."

However, the sad truth, chronicled in my 2015 book *Our Kids*, is that this cherished American Dream is evaporating for over 25 million children born to low income, less educated parents in the last three decades. The economic and social transformations of the last half-century[2] – rising economic insecurity, growing socioeconomic segregation, the collapse of the low income family, the unraveling of working class neighborhoods, and the decline of a collective sense of responsibility for "our kids" – have created a perfect storm of plummeting prospects for the next generation of Americans. Social capital is not the only factor responsible for this growing opportunity gap, but as we shall see, it is a central factor.

Rich kids and poor kids are now growing up in separate and unequal Americas, their fates increasingly and unfairly tied to their "choice" of parents and the zip code in which they are born. In a gated community in sunny Southern California, for example, Jeannette, a stay-at-home mother of three, spends her summer days driving her daughters to tennis and swimming lessons, shopping for nutritious family meals, researching colleges, and planning charity events. Her youngest daughter, Alyssa, works with a college essay tutor in the morning and then trains 6 hours a day with her elite private swimming coach. Spending $20,000 a year on her coach is worth it, Jeannette and her 6-figure-earning husband believe, if swimming helps Alyssa get into a prestigious college. Meanwhile, twenty minutes down the freeway, Natalie, a single mom out of work from a back injury, peers anxiously at a fast-food menu, deciding whether to use her last few dollars on lunch or on gas. Her talented daughter, Laila, has won numerous awards at school, and Natalie always makes it to the ceremonies. But unlike Alyssa, Laila doesn't have a writing tutor, a private coach, or a college fund to help her into the future. She spends her afternoons working at Burger King, pinning her hopes for a better life on a dubious for-profit college and tens of thousands of dollars in loans. And these stories crystallize the growing inequality of opportunity in America, the opportunity gap that is experienced across all stages of a child's life.

Growing up with two parents is now unusual for working class children (the Lailas of America), while two-parent families are nearly universal among the Alyssas and becoming both more common and more stable as well as providing enhanced connections and support for their children. Whether eating dinner with their families, or participating in extracurricular activities like sports or volunteering (where they learn important "soft" skills), middle-class children come of age supported not only by their parents but also teachers and peers who launch them into adulthood and rush to protect them and give them second chances if they fall. Here is social capital advantage at its most vivid.

Rich kids enter kindergarten almost a full year ahead of bottom-third kids, having had almost 1400 more hours of developmental time with their parents (think *Good Night Moon* or patty cake time), having experienced more personalized daycare or the presence of stay-at-home moms, having received $5,700 more in annual parental expenditures on categories like musical instruments or books or summer camp or trips to Paris, and having heard 30 million more words than their poorer counterparts.

Schools did little to cause the opportunity gap but are sites of widening inequality nonetheless due to differential resources and challenges that kids bring with them to school. As a result of increased residential segregation, rich kids increasingly attend schools with other rich kids, and poor kids with other poor kids. This furthers the social capital divide. In their backpacks, rich kids bring parental aspirations and parental resources, benefitting all their classmates, wealthy or not. In their backpacks poor kids bring gang violence, disarray at home, and stunted aspirations, and those things hamper education for all their classmates. Poorer schools increasingly are unsafe, provide fewer extracurricular activities, lack a strong academic culture and quality counseling, and are often staffed by less able, less experienced teachers who teach students who need greater help.

Poor and working-class kids like Laila increasingly grow up in fragile families and neighborhoods where food and housing are insecure, resources are scarce, crime is high, relationships are volatile, and stress is toxic, leaving them too isolated and distrustful to develop the skills, knowledge, and social networks crucial for success. The affluence or poverty of neighborhoods is concentrated at the differing schools that the Lailas and Alyssas attend. The test score gap between rich kids and poor kids is large but exists well before kids even enter school.

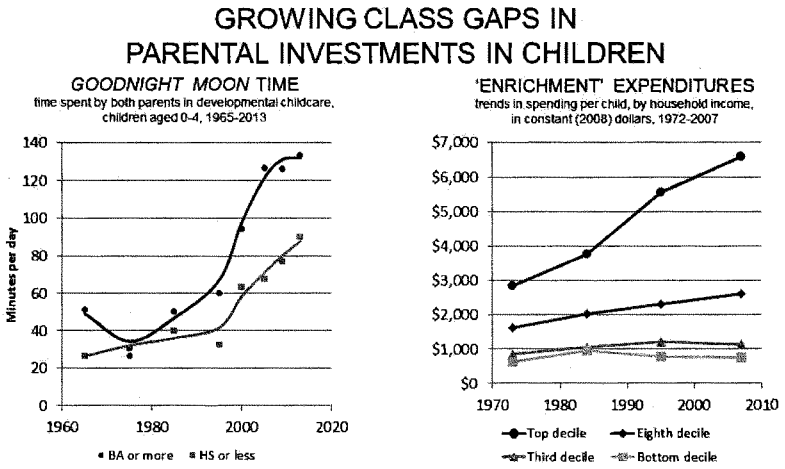
The Lailas of the world leave high school without the social connections and resources to land unpaid internships or quality jobs, without the test prep, lacking quality counseling from family or professionals to navigate college applications, and without the financial aid and "savvy" to choose realistic and economically productive careers.

The following four "scissors graphs," drawn from dozens that appear in *Our Kids*, illustrate some of the growing gaps among American youth in the resources and opportunities available

to kids from affluent, educated homes and those available to kids from low-income, less educated homes.

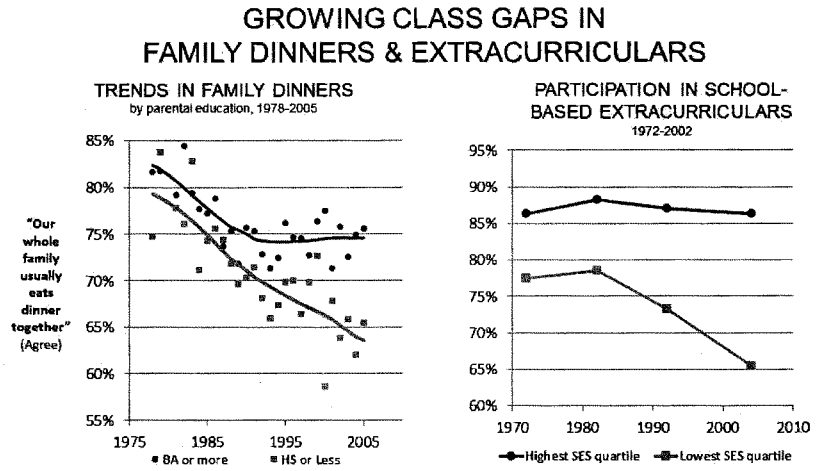
Although time spent by parents interacting with their children in developmental ways (e.g., reading to them) has been increasing in both college-educated homes and high-school-educated homes, the increase has been so much greater for affluent kids that the average "rich kid" now gets about 45 minutes per day more in "Goodnight Moon time" than his or her poor counterpart. The latest brain science shows that this difference powerfully affects children's brain development and school readiness.

Rich parents have long been able to invest more in "enrichment" for their children—for summer camp, piano lessons, trips to the zoo, and private education—but this gap too has dramatically widened in the last forty years.



Family dinners (and conversations about "how did your day go?") have been shown to predict children's success later in life, but the stresses of everyday life, especially for less educated single moms, have produced a growing gap in this indicator of family encouragement for children's development.

Extracurricular activities were initiated in American schools more than a century ago, precisely as a way of inculcating what we now call "soft skills"—grit, teamwork, "stick-to-it-iveness"—and hard evidence confirms that extracurricular participation does have those effects, leading to greater success later in life. But privatization of extracurriculars in recent years (as exemplified by "pay to play") has increasingly deprived poor kids of these opportunities.



These and many similar scissors graphs trace a growing *opportunity gap* between kids from affluent, educated homes and their poorer counterparts. Over time, these trends will add up to diminished rates of upward mobility.

The contrasts in these stories and charts accurately highlight the growing importance of social class differences in America, but that should not blind us to the continuing importance of racial disparities. Race and class have long overlapped in America. Most people of color have always started several rungs down on the ladder of opportunity, and they do today. But added to those longstanding consequences of racism in America, in recent decades purely class disparities have grown, affecting poor kids of all races and appearing *within* each major racial category.

The shriveling of the American Dream of opportunity for all is economically unproductive, democratically ominous, and morally unjust.

- America's economic health has always been powered by a healthy middle class of productive employees and consumers, and we can't afford to write off one third of our future workforce. Economists estimate that our failure to invest in today's poor kids will cost the rest of us $5 trillion over the course of their lifetimes (attributable to criminal justice system costs, health care expenses, and the opportunity cost of wasting the talents of gifted poor kids).

- Over time, increasing numbers of Americans left completely outside "the system"—socially isolated, economically frustrated and politically alienated—contribute to political inequality and civic alienation, and could even pose challenges to America's democratic stability.[3]

- Most important, this opportunity gap is deeply unfair because it violates the core values of American meritocracy and opportunity for all.

As I have emphasized, social capital is not the only factor that has fostered the opportunity gap, but it is pervasive in the stories and analysis that I am summarizing. Most fundamentally, this set of changes reflects a drastically diminished sense of shared destiny and mutual obligation. Two generations ago, when people used the expression "our kids," they meant our community's or our nation's children, but now the term has shriveled to refer only to our own biological children. That is, at root, a consequence of a decline in bridging social capital. America has never thrived with such a narrow vision of the public weal, and we can't let it be our future.

The opportunity gap represents a perfect storm with multiple, interrelated causes, including: 1) the collapse of the white working-class nuclear family; 2) the unraveling of the social fabric in working-class communities; 3) the rapidly increasing segregation of American society along class lines; and 4) increased economic insecurity among the working-class.

Growing up with two parents is now unusual in the white (as well as nonwhite) working class, while two-parent families are normal and becoming more common among the upper middle class (both white and nonwhite). Most Americans are unaware that the white working class family is today more fragile than the black family was at the time of the famous alarm-sounding 1965 "Report on the Negro Family" by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

In the 1960s and 1970s working class schools and neighborhoods had vibrant extracurricular offerings and strong social institutions, like the Catholic Church or Scouts or the Polish-American society or simply older neighbors. Those institutions, in effect, provided a "social safety net" that could help catch and sustain kids experiencing problems at home. Today, that array of institutions and the ranks of "assistant moms" have essentially collapsed in working class neighborhoods. Moreover, in that era poor kids were often living in mixed or moderate income neighborhoods and going to school with more affluent classmates.

At the same time, kids from the upper third of American families are less likely to experience jarring developmental jolts (e.g., a family health problem, parental divorce, parental stress, an unwanted pregnancy, obesity) and much more likely than the bottom third to have "air bags" that cushion this jolt (e.g., their family hiring a tutor or a counselor, one of the parents taking time off from work to get the child back on track, arranging an unpaid internship, or even remodeling their house to cope with a special needs child).

The long economic stagnation for the lower half of the population (ever since the mid-1970s) has weakened the ability of working class families to invest time, energy, money, and love in their kids. As First Lady Laura Bush told me and her husband in a White House meeting: "George, if you don't know how long you're going to keep your house and your job, you have less energy to invest in the kids." Working class families are more tenuously attached to the job market, and working class kids are ten times more likely than upper middle class kids to

experience periods in which their families have no income; moreover, the working class family (prototypically a single-parent family) is far less likely to have savings or friends to buffer these economic shocks and support their kids.

In short, this problem is a quintessential purple problem. Parts of the problem (like the collapse of the working class family) one can see more clearly through red conservative lenses, but parts of the problem (like the long stagnation of working class wages) one can see more clearly through blue progressive lenses. The ideal of equal opportunity has been widely shared across partisan and ideological divisions throughout our history. According to the latest polls, 95 percent of us say that "everyone in America should have equal opportunity to get ahead"—a level of consensus that is virtually never reached in contentious contemporary America. So closing the opportunity gap offers a chance for us—and probably *requires* us—to come together across our partisan polarization to restore the American Dream.

What are possible approaches for narrowing the opportunity gap?

During 2015 my team (the Saguaro Seminar at the Harvard Kennedy School) convened five working groups, composed of roughly 50 experts in all, who were diverse in their disciplines, political orientations, and geographic and demographic backgrounds. The groups considered five important realms in which we might narrow the opportunity gap: family structure and parenting; early childhood; the K-12 years; community institutions and neighborhoods; and "on ramps" for success.

Concerted progress is possible in other domains, but these domains seemed ones where we could most advance the discussion. Two potential areas of interest were left aside for reasons of time and expertise.

1. Successful economic and job development policies in communities are likely to have important positive effects on the local opportunity gap, but assessing such economic strategies was outside the scope of our expertise.
2. Though we discussed community colleges at some length, for the most part we halted our exploration at the doorstep to four-year post-secondary education, partly because we assess that by the time kids enter college, most of the gap has already grown full-size. To use a different metaphor, examining college tuition and other college policies—however important in absolute terms—is like assessing the results of a marathon by focusing on the last 200 yards of the race. In any event, college costs and college policies are outside the scope of our work.

Here is a tasting menu of promising approaches in each area.

FAMILY AND PARENTING: We focused on strategies to improve family stability and effective parenting that undergirds children's success and yields lifelong advantages. The group emphasized the need for both *economic changes* (e.g., helping low income Americans enter the

labor market and making their wages and hours more stable) and *cultural changes* (communicating broadly the importance of relationship stability and the sequence of events that predict children's economic success —graduate from high school, hold a full-time job or have a partner who does, and only have children if married and older than 21). The group recommended strategies to reduce unwanted and unplanned births by developing alternative appealing identities for low income girls besides being a young mom and providing better access to more effective forms of birth control. The group also recommended technological nudges to improve parenting.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: Ages birth to five (especially the first two years) set the foundation for effective later learning and self-regulation and is the most promising period for investments, but America underinvests in these early years relative to most developed countries. Our working group recommended changes across four domains: parenting, early childhood education, economic security, and supports for parents such as paid leave. The working group advised high quality home visiting for first-time moms and noted strategies to ensure the provision of effective early childhood education. The group recommended changes to reduce food insecurity for low income children and provide increased economic stability to their parents.

THE K-12 YEARS, BOTH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL: Schools and education embody the American Dream, but schools today are too often segregated by socioeconomic status and are places of unequal rather than equal opportunity. Our working group noted the importance of good teaching over physical plant or technology in equalizing opportunity and highlighted strategies to improve this teaching. The group advocated supplementing the K-12 curricula through extracurricular activities, wraparound student support, tutoring, and a stronger school-to-work linkage. The group noted that accountability measures need to expand beyond mere test scores. They noted that charters writ large are not a panacea, but useful lessons from successful charter schools can be extracted for all schools.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES: Over the last several decades we've witnessed an increase in the rich living in rich enclaves and the poor living in poor enclaves. Since adversity has become more geographically concentrated, low income children are systematically exposed to fewer mentors, fewer economic opportunities, greater violence, and more toxic environments. The working group recommended strategies to reduce economic segregation through land trusts, more mixed income-housing through housing vouchers plus counseling, and economic development that promotes affordability. The group noted that the effects of residential segregation can be reduced through anchor institutions like hospitals, schools and police, and applauded approaches like workforce development and workforce supports that help low-income residents obtain and keep jobs. The group also recommended strategies to reconnect disconnected low-income youth through more systematic mentoring and an increased role for religious institutions as community partners.

"ON RAMPS" FOR SUCCESS: About 1 in 7 young adults (16-24) are both out-of-school and out-of-work. Our "on ramps" working group focused on strategies both to enable them to be more successful economically and to stem this problem for future cohorts. The group recommended a greater linking of the world of work and education (with earlier exposure to work internships for all), and revamping community colleges to make them easier institutions to navigate and from which to graduate. The group also recommended strategies to smooth transitions both between high school and community college and between community colleges and 4-year institutions. The group gave guidance on how to rethink community college "remediation" for inadequately prepared high school graduates.

These five baskets of policy suggestions are interconnected. Relevant reforms of *K-12 schools* cannot be considered in isolation from the starkly contrasting *neighborhoods* in which rich and poor kids live. *Early childhood education* appears to be most effective when combined with *parental coaching* and *home visiting*. Improved *mentoring* must be part of any strategy for lowering the dropout rate from *community colleges*. Few of our participants think there is a single magic bullet, so focusing only on any one basket while ignoring the wider web of causes and solutions is likely to be ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive.

Reports like ours are often written by and for policy advisors to national leaders—presidential candidates, Congressional leaders, Cabinet officials, and so on—and we hope that national leaders will find our report interesting. Our set of white papers, however, was aimed primarily at a different audience of grassroots leaders and activists: state and local public officials, community foundations, state and local philanthropists, school and health officials, local civic, business, religious, and non-profit leaders. We targeted that audience for three related reasons.

First, American federalism is a great strength of our country, since states and localities—"laboratories of democracy," as Justice Brandeis famously put it—can pursue experimental policies and learn from one another. As we shall illustrate momentarily, major social reforms in this country have historically typically begun as state and local experiments. When they proved successful, such innovations have rapidly diffused horizontally to other states and localities and have risen vertically to become embodied in national policy.

Second, as we have emphasized, solutions to the opportunity gap will need to be holistic and interdisciplinary, involving cooperation and coordination among different agencies. That is easier to do at the state and local level than in Washington.

And finally, we live in an age of extreme, maybe even unprecedented political polarization, stymieing efforts at addressing public problems in every sphere of life, including the opportunity gap. That polarization now extends to states and localities, but seems somewhat less intense and paralyzing locally than it is nationally. Local leaders can work in purple.

The reason that grassroots leaders can be expected to play such a crucial role in narrowing the existing opportunity gaps is that they've surmounted such problems before. The period at the

end of the 19th century – the Gilded Age – was a period very much like ours today. The Gilded Age was a time of high immigration, high political alienation, rapid technological change, and concentrated wealth.

Then, as now, new concentrations of wealth and corporate power raised questions about the real meaning of democracy. Then, as now, massive urban concentrations of impoverished ethnic minorities posed basic questions of social justice and social stability. Then, as now, the comfortable upper-middle class was torn between the seductive attractions of escape and the deeper demands of redemptive social solidarity.

Then, as now, new forms of commerce, a restructured workplace, and a new spatial organization of human settlement threatened older forms of solidarity. Then, as now, waves of immigration changed the complexion of America and seemed to imperil the *unum* in our *pluribus*. Then, as now, materialism, political cynicism, and a penchant for spectatorship rather than action seemed to thwart idealistic reformism. Then, as now, older strands of social solidarity were being abraded—even destroyed—by technological and economic and social change. Then, as now, the dominant public philosophy (then termed "social Darwinism") lauded selfish-centeredness as the prime virtue. Then as now, America had become more of an "I" society and less of a "we" society. Serious observers understood that the path from the past could not be retraced, but few saw clearly the path to a better future.

Enter some intrepid social reformers. They had national spokespeople like Teddy Roosevelt and Jane Addams, but most of the creative innovators worked at the state and local level. Instead of embracing the trend toward ideological individualism, reformers saw the problems as societal flaws, not individual failings. Growing numbers of Americans began to recognize the problem, and gradually many began to seek solutions. Among the harbingers of change was a book by a Danish-American journalist *How the Other Half Lives*. As a photojournalist, Jacob Riis set out to describe the plight of poor tenement dwellers in the slums of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, aiming his words at the affluent readers in the Silk Stocking district on the Upper East Side. Enough of his readers were moved by this desecration of the American Dream that political reformers in both parties (TR chief among them) moved to institute practical improvements, beginning with clean water and clean streets. As this movement spread, it crossed party lines and crossed the continent.

In the Progressive Era, social entrepreneurs often experimented with home-grown ideas, such as social and fraternal organizations (Rotary, the Moose, Kiwanis) or extracurricular activities like high school band and football (as alluded to earlier). They also imported innovative ideas from abroad: e.g., kindergartens from Germany; settlement houses and the Boy Scouts from England.

Progressive Era innovation was galvanized by a conscious practitioner-academic dialogue. Dialogues among business and community leaders, academics, and political officials in places like Toledo and Galveston led to some of the most successful and enduring innovations.

Chicago's Hull House, founded by Jane Addams, fostered dialogue between the worlds she seamlessly spanned: the Hull House community and leading academics at University of Chicago. These conversations spread powerful, successful ideas and won national attention. For example, Addams and Florence Kelley partnered with academics on the 1909 White House Conference on Children which led to the U.S. Children's Bureau and to urban reform policies.

The Progressive Era included many reforms (not all of them effective or even beneficent)—too many to list here. But the single most important—or at least the most instructive for our times—was aimed at the opportunity gap of that era.

The High School was *invented* by American reformers around 1910, beginning in small towns in the Heartland. Until that time, nowhere in the world had any community decided that all kids in town would get—just because they were kids in town—a free, comprehensive, four-year secondary education. Prior to that, only those families who could afford it obtained secondary education. But beginning in small towns in the Midwest and spreading out from there, a grassroots "High School movement" demanded that all children, regardless of their family background, have the opportunity to earn a secondary education.

This was a hard sell. Reformers had to convince the wealthier folks in town (whose kids likely had already received a private secondary education) that they should pay higher taxes so that all the other kids in town could get a free secondary education. Slowly but surely, citizens in these towns and then in towns and cities across America agreed to invest in *other* people's children. And it turned out to be the best public policy decision America has ever made.

That decision – to make sure everyone in America had a chance to get a free secondary education – meant our workforce became the best trained in the world. That huge boost in productivity accounted for most of America's economic growth in the twentieth century. At the same time, that decision also leveled the playing field for all kids across America, raising social mobility for at least half a century. This grassroots-born innovation combined two values that economists sometimes tell us are incompatible—it increased both efficiency (improving national productivity for all) and equity (helping the less well-off even more). It renewed the American promise from the bottom up.

Our challenge now is to be as creative and experimental as the people who dreamed up the idea of free secondary education and to be as convincing to our fellow citizens of the need to make change in our society. In the Progressive Era, breakthrough ideas typically did not come from Washington. There was a national conversation happening about these larger issues of opportunity and education, but the role of the national conversation was to give oxygen to local reformers across the U.S. and thus to breathe life into the reforms that began to equalize opportunity in America.

Our working groups aimed mostly to confine our recommendations to interventions for which there is good evidence of effectiveness. But we note that free high schools in America were never subjected to rigorous quantitative evaluation before they were introduced, so our list of

potential approaches should not limit the imaginations and creativity of local social entrepreneurs committed to addressing this growing opportunity gap.

We don't know for sure what the equivalent innovation for the 21st century will be—universal early childhood education, or universal college (2-year or 4-year), or some other bold innovation as yet unimagined. But our set of policy approaches is designed to help stimulate an intense period of civic renewal and policy experimentation that will begin to narrow the opportunity gap that threatens America today. We recognize the value of learning lessons from abroad, but our aspiration is not be make America Sweden, but to do in today's America what Americans have done before.[4]

Example 2: How Bowling Alone leads to Aging Alone: Social Capital in the Later Years of Life

Providing care for aging Americans is a major (and growing) nationwide problem. One widely recognized reason is simply the massive number of baby boomers who are now retiring, but one *unrecognized* part of the problem is that boomers (from the generation that brought us Bowling Alone) will almost certainly require substantially more paid eldercare per person than their parents' generation. Long-term generational differences in social capital turn out to have massive implications for policy (public and private) in this domain.

Although many aging Americans spend their later years in some form of paid/institutionalized care (e.g. nursing homes and home healthcare aides), many more receive unpaid, informal care from family, friends, neighbors, and civic organizations (i.e. social capital). The best estimate from recent decades is that roughly three quarters of all care for Americans over 65 is provided through such unpaid, informal channels.[5]

However, current estimates of the amount of informal care that will be required in the next 20 years (that is, for the boomer or "Bowling Alone" generation) are based almost exclusively on our experience with eldercare over the previous three-four decades, when the elderly were in fact the boomers' parents, a generation with historically high levels of social capital.[6]

Crucially, however, the boomer generation is entering their sunset years with much less social capital than their parents had at the same age. Therefore, our current estimates substantially underestimate the amount of paid/institutional care that will be required in the next 20 years. Consider in turn each source of informal social support for aging Americans.

- Spouses: The boomers are the generation that experienced the divorce epidemic beginning in the 1970s, whereas their parents were members of one of the most stably married cohorts in recent history. Thus, roughly 12 percent fewer of the mid-boomer birth cohort of 1955 will be living with spouses when they reach age 65 than was true of the birth cohort of 1930 (roughly speaking, the boomers' parents) when *they* reached 65.[7]

- Children: Boomers had many fewer children than their parents (who were, after all, the parents of the baby boom). Assuming similar midlife mortality rates among those children, the birth cohort of 1955 will reach retirement age with roughly 36% fewer children than the birth cohort of 1930 had.[8]
- Close friends: the birth cohort of 1950–59 had an average of 2.1 close friends in 2004, when they were about 50, compared to 3.0 close friends for the birth cohort of 1930–39 in 1985, when they were about 50, i.e., about 30% fewer close friends.[9]
- Community involvement: On measures like dinner parties, club meetings, and church-going the boomers reported about roughly 40% fewer community ties when they were in their 40s than their parents had reported when they were in their 40s.[10]

Thus, in round numbers the boomers are entering retirement with one third less social support than their parents had at the same stage of life. This is the history that lies behind recent headlines like "How an Epidemic of Loneliness is Killing the Men We Love" and "Loneliness among Seniors."[11] The generation that "bowled alone" will now "age alone."

Social isolation is widely recognized as a strong predictor of morbidity and mortality, especially among the elderly. What is seldom recognized is that the trend toward increasing social isolation among boomers, compared to their parents, will inevitably impair their health and reduce the degree to which the elderly over the next two decades will be able to rely on informal care as they age. Conversely, the burden on paid, institutionalized care will rise sharply above current expectations, not simply because there are more boomers[12] (for which current projections already account), but because proportionally more of them will need paid, institutionalized care (for which current projections do not account). As illustrated in the set of charts below, over the coming decades this factor alone will mean that paid eldercare per boomer will, on average, have to double, as compared to their parents.

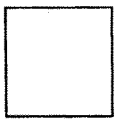
This analysis does not show how that massive increase in formal, paid eldercare will be paid for—through public or private mechanisms or in some other way—and in any event I would not want to stake my reputation on the precise decimal points in these calculations.[13,14] But this issue illustrates that ignoring trends in social capital can blind us to massively important public policy issues. One could imagine more "progressive" approaches or more "conservative" approaches to the problem, or a combination of both, but the problem itself is not going to vanish.

This threat to our national accounts, financial as well as moral, stems directly from the fact that 40-50 years ago younger Americans began bowling alone. Social capital is an underappreciated dimension of this issue (as well as of the opportunity gap) for national decision-makers.

Draft of May 16, 2017

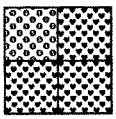
How Aging Alone may affect the costs of eldercare

Total elderly Americans needing care in 2010-11



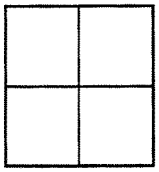
In 2010-11, Americans 65 and over totaled 40.2 million people, of whom 29% (11.5 million) needed care.

How that care was provided in 2010-11



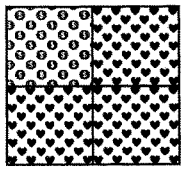
In 2010-11, 24% of all eldercare was paid care, while 77% was provided informally.

Total elderly Americans needing care in 2030



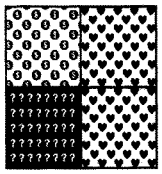
Americans 65 and over are projected to total 72 million people, of whom at least one quarter (18 million) are projected to need care.

Current projections of how that care will be provided in 2030



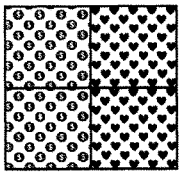
Current projections assume that retired boomers will enjoy as much informal (unpaid) care as their parents' generation.

How that care can be provided in 2030



As the "Bowling Alone" generation, Boomers have 1/3 less social support than their parents, and thus will likely enjoy 1/3 less informal elder care than currently projected.

How that care will have to be provided in 2030



To replace the missing informal, unpaid eldercare will require paid elder care roughly to double from current projections.

[1] This section is based on https://www.hks.harvard.edu/programs/saguaro/about-social-capital/faqs, as well as a number of my publications over the quarter century, including *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti; *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Sociol Capital in Contemporary Society*, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003) with Lewis Feldstein and Don Cohen; and *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010) with David E. Campbell. Second edition with new Epilogue, 2011.

[2] A landmark overview of these trends is Charles Murray, *Caming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010.* (New York: Crown, 2012).

[3] "An inert and atomized mass of alienated and estranged citizens, disconnected from social institutions, might under normal circumstances pose only a minimal threat to political stability, with any menace muted by the masses' very apathy. Government under such circumstances might not be very democratic, but at least it would be stable. But under severe economic or international pressures—such as the pressures that overwhelmed Europe and America in the 1930s—that "inert" mass might suddenly prove highly volatile and open to manipulation by anti-democratic demagogues at the ideological extremes." Robert D. Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

[4] For more information on the working group process, visit www.theopportunitygap.com. A coalition of community foundations—the Community Foundation Opportunity Network—is currently undertaking a nationwide array of, locally-based, evidence-based projects to test and implement the strategies outlined in the Closing the Opportunity Gap report. For more on that initiative, see https://www.theopportunitygap.com/about-us/.

[5] The 2011 National Health and Aging Trends Study found that, of the 38.2 million Americans over age 65, 2.9 percent live in a nursing home. The remaining 71.3 percent did not [yet] require living assistance. Of the 25.8 percent who required assistance with self-care, mobility, and/or household activities but did not live in a nursing home, 95 percent received unpaid help, while 34.5 percent received paid help. Of the mean 169.7 hours of help each person received monthly, 143.8 hours or 85 percent were unpaid. Vicki Freedman and Brenda Spillman, "Disability and Care Needs Among Older Americans," Milbank Quarterly 92, no. 3 (2014): 509-41. If we assume that all care provided in nursing homes is paid, then {[.029 x 1.00] + [.258 x 0.15]}/.287 = 23.5% of all care was paid care, while 76.5% is provided informally.

[6] *Bowling Alone*, chapter 14.

[7] In the 1990 Census, 73% of 60-year-olds were living with their spouse. In the 2015 American Community Survey, that figure had fallen to 64%, a decline of 12% (9 percentage points). Own analysis of Census and ACS data from IPUMS.

[8] In 1980, women born in 1930 (thus then 50 years old) had had an average of living 3.1 children. In 2005, women born in 1955 had had an average of 1.98 living children. CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, "Table 2. Cumulative birth rates, by live-birth order, exact age, and race of women in each cohort from 1911 through 1991: United States, 1961–2006," https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/cohort_fertility_tables.htm.

[9] Our analysis of General Social Survey data from 1985 and 2004. For a detailed methodological debate about these data, see Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin and Matthew E. Brashears, "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades," American Sociological Review 71 (Jun., 2006), pp. 353-375; Claude S. Fischer, "The 2004 GSS Finding of Shrunken Social Networks: An Artifact?" American Sociological Review 74 (August, 2009): 657-69; and Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin and Matthew E. Brashears, "Reply to Fischer: Models and Marginals: Using Survey Evidence to Study Social Networks," American Sociological Review 74, (Aug., 2009): 670-681.

[10] Using DDB Lifestyle data, as analyzed in Bowling Alone, we compared the 1995–98 behavior of the cohort born in 1950–59 with the 1975–78 behavior of the cohort born 1930–39. That comparison approximates the behavior of the boomer generation and their parents' generation when each cohort was in their 40s. The older cohort had attended 6.8 dinner parties in the previous 12 months, compared with 3.8 for the younger cohort, a decline of 45 percent. The older cohort attended 11.1 club meetings in the previous 12 months, compared with 5.1 for the

younger cohort, a decline of 54 percent. The older cohort attended church or another place of worship 27.3 times in the previous 12 months, compared with 19.7 for the younger cohort, a decline of 28 percent.

[11] Social isolation is a risk factor for several adverse health outcomes, including death and elements of functional decline, including stair climbing, upper extremity tasks, daily living activities, and other mobility functions. In older people, the effect is independent from the emotional experience of loneliness and appears to be caused by isolation itself, perhaps because of the lack of social support to prompt medical attention to an acute condition or because of biological consequences from lack of social engagement. In addition to changes in health-related behavior, greater loneliness is also linked to more stress exposure, greater feelings of helplessness, more severe physiological responses to stress, and lower quality of sleep. Isolation may be particularly problematic for older people because they face new challenges unique to their age, such as life transitions, declining health, and new disabilities. Conversely, social connectedness can provide access to material resources, such as information; promote healthy behaviors; and discourage risky activities such as smoking. Among many other sources, see Carla M. Perissinotto, Irena Stijacic Cenzer, and Kenneth E. Covinsky, "Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 172, no. 14 (July 23, 2012): 1078–84, doi:10.1001/archinternmed.2012.1993; Andrew Steptoe et al., "Social Isolation, Loneliness, and All-Cause Mortality in Older Men and Women," *Proceedings of the Natianal Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 15 (April 9, 2013): 5799, doi:10.1073/pnas.1219686110; John T. Cacioppo, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 99–108; Erin York Cornwell and Linda J. Waite, "Social Disconnectedness, Perceived Isolation, and Health among Older Adults," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50, no. 1 (2009): 31–48.

[12] In 2010, 40.2 million Americans were aged 65 or older, but that number is forecast to be 72.1 million in 2030, an increase of about 79 percent. Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Projected Future Growth of the Older Population," September 2014, available at https://aoa.acl.gov/Aging_Statistics/future_growth/future_growth.aspx.

[13] An important caveat: Although I have carefully tried to establish the basis for my calculations, I report here research in progress which has not yet been subjected to formal peer review. Much of this work was done in collaboration with Chaz Kelsh, a graduate student at the Harvard Kennedy School, but responsibility for any errors rests entirely with me.

[14] In 2004, about 46 percent of Americans' nursing home expenses were paid for by Medicaid. Georgetown University Long-Term Care Financing Project, "National Spending for Long-Term Care" fact sheet, January 2007, available at https://hpi.georgetown.edu/ltc/papers.html.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES MURRAY, W. H. BRADY SCHOLAR, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Members of the Committee have before them the excellent report, "What We Do Together," from the Social Capital Project, and the presence of Robert Putnam, who knows more about American social capital than anyone in the world. So what am I supposed to add?

I've decided to emphasize how complicated are the effects of the deterioration of social capital on human behavior. Statistics on the decline of marriage and of male labor force participation are important. But they tend to make the task of solving those problems sound too straightforward. Fewer people are getting married? Maybe that can be fixed, or at least ameliorated, by higher working-class wages so that people can more easily afford to get married. Males aren't in the labor force? We need more and better job opportunities.

I am not saying such solutions would have no good effects. But the actual problems reach deeply into the ways that humans are socialized into institutions like marriage and the labor force. A good way to get a grip on those actual problems is Prof. Putnam's book, "Our Kids." The heart of that book consists of five accounts of real people and real families in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Orange County California, Big Bend Oregon, and Port Clinton Ohio. Those stories provide ammunition for Bernie Sanders and Charles Murray alike. We hear the voices of the unemployed whose manufacturing jobs were exported abroad—a real problem—and the voices of people who quit good jobs because they didn't feel like working or who got fired because they showed up late, shirked their tasks, and got in fights with coworkers—another real problem. We hear stories of unmarried low-income parents who were fiercely devoted to their kids and of other parents who created children casually and walked away from them casually.

But if I had to pick one theme threaded throughout all of these superbly told stories, it is the many ways in which people behaved impulsively—throwing away real opportunities—and unrealistically, possessing great ambitions but oblivious to the steps required to get from point A to point B to point C to point D in life. The same theme appears in steroids in J.D. Vance's best-selling memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy." He describes an America that is still the land of opportunity; we know it is, because his parents and extended family squandered a prodigious number of opportunities. You read Vance's account and keep saying to yourself, "Why are they behaving so self-destructively?"

It comes down to the age-old problem of getting people, especially young people, not to do things that are attractive in the short term but disastrous in the long term and, conversely, to do things that aren't fun right now but that will open up rewards later in life. The problem is not confined to any socioeconomic class. The mental disorder known as adolescence afflicts rich and poor alike. And adolescence can extend a long time after people have left their teens. The most common way that the fortunate among us manage to get our priorities straight—or at least not irretrievably screw them up—is by being cocooned in the institutions that are the primary resources for generating social capital: a family consisting of married parents and active membership in a faith tradition.

I didn't choose my phrasing lightly. I am not implying that single parents are incapable of filling this function—millions of them are striving heroically to do so—nor that children cannot grow up successfully if they don't go to church. With regard to families, I am making an empirical statement: As a matter of statistical tendencies, biological children of married parents do much better on a wide variety of important life outcomes than children growing up in any other family structure, even after controlling for income, parental education, and ethnicity. With regard to religion, I am making an assertion about a resource that can lead people, adolescents and adults alike, to do the right thing even when the enticements to do the wrong thing are strong: a belief that God commands them to do the right thing. I am also invoking religion as a community of faith—a phrase that I borrow from, guess who, Robert Putnam. For its active members, a church is far more than a place that they go to worship once a week. It is a form of community that socializes the children growing up in it in all sorts of informal ways, just as a family socializes children.

This is not a preface to a set of policy recommendations. I have none. Rather, I would argue that it is not a matter of ideology but empiricism to conclude that unless the traditional family and traditional communities of faith make a comeback, the declines in social capital that are already causing so much deterioration in our civic culture will continue and the problems will worsen. The solutions are unlikely to be political but cultural. We need a cultural Great Awakening akin to past reli-

gious Great Awakenings. How to bring about that needed cultural great awakening is a question above my pay grade.

"The State of Social Capital in America Today"

Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress

May 17, 2017

Yuval Levin
The Ethics and Public Policy Center
and *National Affairs*

Chairman Tiberi, Ranking Member Heinrich, Vice Chairman Lee, and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

It is very encouraging to see the Joint Economic Committee turn its attention to the question of social capital. Too often in our policy debates, we incline to separate the purely economic from the social and interpersonal facets of the challenges Americans confront, and by doing that we fail to understand any of these challenges very well.

Considering social capital is a particularly constructive way to better understand obstacles to mobility and opportunity in America because it offers us the promise of overcoming the familiar partisan division between focusing on money and focusing on culture.

The fact is that our country has become deeply divided and fragmented in ways that create some particularly pernicious and complicated obstacles for Americans trying to rise out of poverty. And our political system has struggled to pin the blame for this phenomenon somewhere without fully acknowledging its character. The Left tends to see economic inequality as the root of all other forms of social fracturing, and argues therefore that a policy of more aggressive redistribution would not only help ease income inequality but also mitigate the political power of the wealthy, strengthen poor communities and families, and create more opportunities for all. An emphasis on cultural problems like family breakdown, many progressives now suggest, is a distraction from these real causes—if not an attempt to blame the victims and opportunistically advance an oppressive cultural agenda that can only further burden the most disadvantaged.

The Right sees cultural disintegration—marked especially by the breakdown of family and community—as the source of the persistence of entrenched poverty in America. Conservatives therefore argue that social policy must focus on family and community, and worry that the Left's misguided efforts to address entrenched poverty through greater economic redistribution can only make things worse by hampering the economy, distorting the personal choices of the disadvantaged with perverse incentives, and exacerbating dependency.

In an effort to avoid the rather obvious conclusion that cultural and economic factors are inseparable, progressives and conservatives thus tend to exaggerate the implications of their favored explanations. They predict that either growing inequality or increasing family and cultural breakdown, respectively, will turn out to be unsustainable, and so lead to a cataclysm, or a rip in the social fabric that will force a great reckoning.

But things are likely both better and worse than that: Both growing inequality and increasing social breakdown may well be sustainable, but may not be compatible with human flourishing. We are not headed for a cataclysm, but we are stuck in a rut, and getting out of it will require understanding it. No moment of change will be forced upon us, so if we are to revive the fortunes of the least among us, we will need to act.

Our debates about whether culture or economics ultimately matters most keep us from seeing what kind of action might be plausible. These debates often implicitly revolve around the question of whether we should attempt a reversal of the significant liberalization of the past half century and more in the economic sphere (as the Left would prefer) or the social sphere (as the Right would like), when the fact is that we stand little chance of any wholesale reversal in either realm. This leaves us with a politics of dual denial: In any given policy debate, one party (be it Republicans on cultural matters or Democrats in economics) denies the fact that the liberalization of our society's way of life is a dominant and essentially irreversible fact about contemporary America while the other party denies that this fact entails some very significant problems.

To see that the challenges we face are in many respects the opposite side of the coin of the advantages we possess is not easy for anyone in our politics. We all want to believe we can have the good without the bad—progress without a price. And not only that, we also tend to believe this is possible because we tend to believe it has happened in our country before. Our political culture now lives under the sway of an intense nostalgia for a period we believe embodied this extraordinary possibility: the roughly two decades that followed the end of the Second World War.[1]

The America that our exhausted, wistful now politics misses so much, the nation as it first emerged from the Great Depression and World War II and gradually evolved from there, was exceptionally unified and cohesive. It had at first an extraordinary confidence in large institutions—big government, big labor, and big business that would work together to meet the nation's needs. That confidence is just stunning, from our vantage point.

America's *economic* life in that period was highly regulated and consolidated, as depression-era and wartime controls were only slowly loosened. But in the wake of a war in which most of its competitors had burned each other's economies to the ground, America utterly dominated the world economy, offering economic opportunity to workers of all kinds—high skill and mid-skill and low skill.

America's *cultural* life at midcentury was no less consolidated. It was dominated by a broad traditionalist moral consensus. Religious attendance was at a peak, families were strong, birth rates were high, divorce rates were low. So inequality and family breakdown were both contained in that era; opportunity and cultural cohesion were both strong. At least for whites in America, which is no small caveat of course, that time really was exceptional.

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[1] The discussion that follows draws upon my 2016 book, *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism* (Basic Books).

But almost immediately after the war, that consolidated nation began a long process of unwinding and fragmenting. Over the subsequent decades, the culture liberalized and diversified, as struggles against racism and sexism coincided with a massive increase in immigration. Meanwhile, some key parts of the economy were deregulated to keep up with rising competitors, and our labor market was forced by globalizing pressures to specialize in higher-skill work that has diminished opportunities for Americans with lower levels of education. And in politics, an exceptional mid-century elite consensus on some key issues gave way by the 70s to renewed divisions that got sharper and sharper.

In one arena after another, America in the immediate postwar years was a model of consolidation and consensus, but through the following decades that consensus fractured. By the end of the 20th century, this fracturing of consensus grew from diffusion into polarization—of political views, economic opportunities, incomes, family patterns, and ways of life. We have grown less conformist but more fragmented; more diverse but less unified; more dynamic but less secure.

All of this has meant many gains for America: in national prosperity, in personal liberty, in cultural diversity, in technological progress, in social justice, and in options and choices in every realm of life. But over time it has also meant a loss of faith in institutions, a loss of social order and structure, a loss of national cohesion, a loss of security and stability for many workers, and a loss of cultural consensus. Those losses have piled up in ways that now often seem to overwhelm the gains, and have made our 21st century politics distinctly backward-looking and morose.

Conservatives and liberals have emphasized different facets of these changes. Liberals treasure the social liberation and the growing cultural diversity of the past half century but lament the economic dislocation, the loss of social solidarity, and the rise in inequality. Conservatives celebrate the economic liberalization and dynamism but lament the social instability, moral disorder, cultural breakdown, and weakening of fundamental institutions and traditions.

But these changes are all tied together. The liberalization that the left celebrates often *is* the fragmentation the right laments, and vice versa. That set of forces—liberalizing, fragmenting, diversifying, fracturing—have defined our country's past half century both for good and for bad.

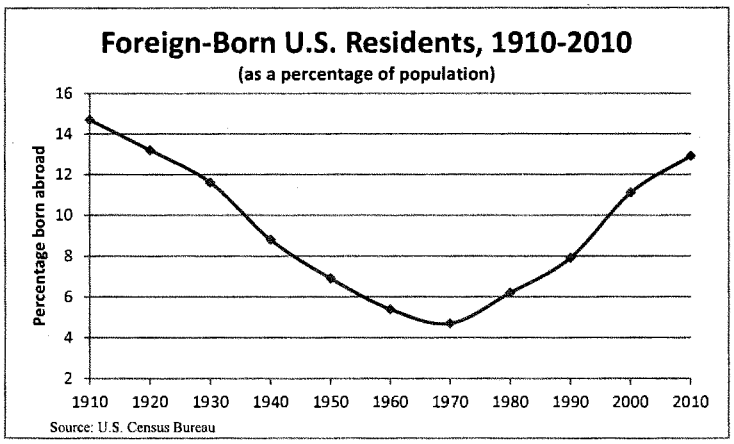
In very broad terms, the first half of the 20th century, up through World War II, was an age of growing consolidation and cohesion in American life—as our economy industrialized, government grew more centralized, the culture became more aggregated through mass media, and national identity and cohesion were often valued above individuality and diversity. In those years, a great many of the most powerful forces in American life were pushing each American to become more like everyone else. And the nation that emerged from World War II was therefore highly, profoundly, exceptionally cohesive.

The second half of the 20th century (and these opening decades of the 21st century too) then marked an age of growing deconsolidation and decentralization—as the culture became increasingly variegated and diverse, the economy gradually diversified and in some respects deregulated, and individualism and personal identity came to be held up above conformity and national unity. In these years, a great many of the most powerful forces in American life have

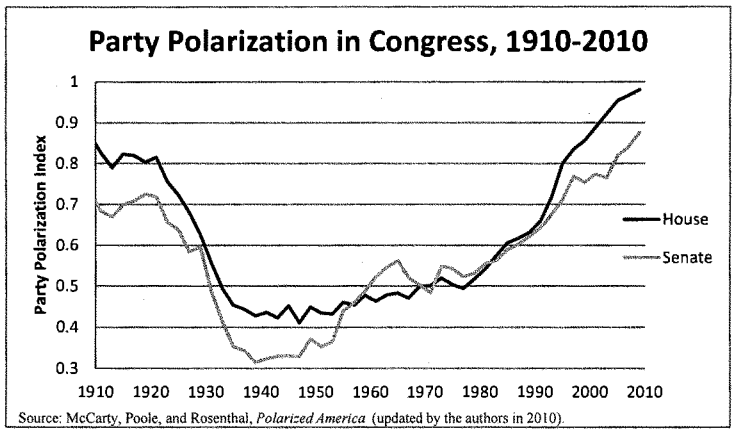
been pushing each American to become not more like everyone else but more like himself or herself.

Across a wide range of different facets of our national life, the past century has therefore seen a pattern of drawing together and then pulling apart. American society became intensely consolidated and cohesive as it modernized through the middle of the 20th century, and then more diverse and diffuse.

There are many ways we might illustrate this pattern, but perhaps three distinct representations will suffice to help us see its broad outlines. In the social arena, we would want some measure of the diversity of our society as it has changed over time. The percentage of Americans born abroad is one plausible metric on that front, and as tracked by the Census Bureau over the past century or so it reveals a pattern of dramatic change:

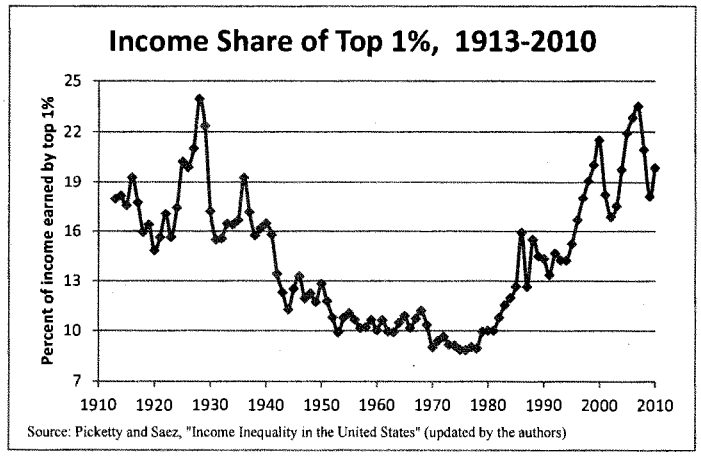


In the political arena, there is probably no similarly convenient metric, but a measure of polarization will provide one gauge of unity and disparity in our democracy. Examining party loyalty in congressional roll-call votes over more than a century, political scientists Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal crafted an ingenious index that quantifies party polarization in Congress, and the picture it provides gestures toward a similar pattern.



Source: McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, *Polarized America* (updated by the authors in 2010).

In the economic arena, the most commonly used measure of polarization and cohesion is income inequality. Debates have long raged about exactly what figures best represent the relevant facts about inequality, but a measure of the proportion of all income earned by the top 1 percent of earners has been commonly used to stand in for overall trends. Economists Thomas Piketty and Emanuel Saez have used income-tax data to track that percentage over the past century, and the pattern they discern looks like this:



Source: Picketty and Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States" (updated by the authors)

In all three cases, and many others that have followed a similar trajectory, what we see are very significant changes, not slight ups and downs. They tell a tale of intense consolidation followed by intense diffusion.

This pattern shows us that mid-century America straddled two broad trends, which surely contributed to its exceptional character. It experienced the liberalization of a consolidated society. Many Americans in that time could therefore take for granted some of the benefits of consolidation (like relatively stable families and communities, confidence in institutions, a sense of national purpose, modest inequality, a broad moral consensus, and robust cultural cohesion) while actively combatting some of its least attractive downsides (like institutional racism, sexism, overbearing cultural conformity, and a dearth of economic freedom). Combined with America's unique global economic position following the Second World War, this made for a period of unprecedented prosperity and confidence.

But it was an inherently unstable and unsustainable combination of circumstances. The liberalization that was so important to the character of postwar America was bound to undermine—indeed, was intended to undermine—the consolidation that played a no less important part in forming that unusual moment. Over time, therefore, the change became the context, and Americans could no longer take stability, cohesion, and self-confidence for granted as a counterforce to their growing individualism and dynamism.

The powerful nostalgia for the 1950s and early 60s that so dominates our politics is, in essence, a longing for a safe and stable backdrop for various forms of liberalization—be it toward a culture of expressive individualism or toward market economics. But Americans have plainly valued these forms of liberalization more than we valued the backdrop, and it is folly now to wish we could recapture the very circumstances that America has been systematically demolishing for six decades and more just so we could more comfortably engage in the very same demolition.

That process of liberalization has now done its work, and our society is its result. We are a highly individualistic, diverse, fragmented society—economically, politically, and culturally. And none of that is about to be undone. So we will have to solve our problems as such a society. Both our strengths and our weaknesses are functions of this path we have traveled together, and we will now have to draw on those strengths to address those weaknesses.

That last part is what we find so hard to accept. Some of the most serious problems we face are not just obstacles to our pursuit of our society's highest hopes but also consequences of that pursuit. In liberating many individuals from oppressive social constraints, we have also unmoored and estranged many from families, communities, work, and faith. In enabling a profusion of options and choices in every part of life to meet our particular needs and wants, we have also unraveled the established institutions of an earlier era, and so unraveled the public's broader faith in institutions of all kinds. In loosening the reins of cultural conformity and national identity and opening ourselves to an immense diversity of cultures, we have weakened the roots of mutual trust. In unleashing markets to meet the needs and wants of consumers, we have freed them also to treat workers as dispensable and interchangeable. In pursuing meritocracy, we have magnified inequality. In looking for a more personalized, representative politics we have propelled polarization. In seeking to treat every person equally and individually rather than

forcing all to conform, we have accentuated and concentrated the differences between the top and bottom in our society, and hollowed out the middle.

In all of these ways and more, as patterns of diffusion evolve into patterns of bifurcated concentration—of a top and a bottom separated by a great chasm—we have done more than change the structures of institutions and relationships. We have altered the shapes of lives and souls. We have set loose a scourge of loneliness and isolation that we are still afraid to acknowledge as the distinct social dysfunction of our age of individualism, just as a crushing conformity was the characteristic scourge of an era of cohesion and national unity.

And yet, for all that, this is not an indictment of our time. We could surely make the case that the benefits of all of this in personal freedom, wealth, justice, and happiness have been worth the costs on the whole. But that does not release us from the obligation to confront the costs, and to do what we can to address them.

So what can we do? If we do not want to give up the gains our country has made but we do want to mitigate somehow the price we have paid for those gains, what options might we have? This is where social capital becomes essential, and why it is so important to take it up today. Social capital is what allows people to make the most of opportunities, to endure through challenging times, and to thrive amid complexity and change. Social capital describes the thick of our common life—the networks of people and institutions that compose the substance of our society and enable it to function.

Without robust social capital, the material benefits provided by the welfare state could never be enough to enable disadvantaged Americans to rise. Without robust social capital, no amount of moralizing about discipline and responsibility could make a difference in the lives of broken families and communities. Social capital is what makes it possible for help to help.

And the liberalization of our society—both moral and economic—has undermined our capacity to sustain and replenish social capital. That liberalization has advanced under a banner of individualism, seeking to liberate each of us from constricting moral constraints and from oppressive regulation but in the process often also unmooring us from relationships of mutual obligation. And as it has advanced, it has also robbed us of mutual trust, which is an essential ingredient in the development and retention of social capital.

Social capital is built up slowly and exhausted slowly. It is built by long, arduous work constructing relationships, establishing institutions, cultivating norms, shaping expectations, and developing mutual trust. Decline is often slow as well. We can burn this capital for a long time while taking it for granted. But we have lived through a very long decline in social capital in recent decades, and its effects are being visited upon us now—and especially upon the most vulnerable among us.

The steps we incline instinctively to take in response can make the problem worse. The expansion of welfare programs that substitute for thick social networks with a check and the acceleration of efforts to liberate the economy from socially-imposed restraints for the sake of greater growth that might help everyone both tend to exacerbate the pattern by which the

mediating layers of our national life are emptied out. Those layers, between the individual and the national state, are where social capital is built up and put to use. And a replenishment of social capital, a recovery of the capacity to make use of opportunities and to endure setbacks, will require a revitalization of those middle spaces.

This is a cause toward which our national politics is not now naturally disposed. Instead, we incline to a politics that answers the problems created by an excessive individualism by further empowering the national government. It is important to see that this inclination is likely a symptom of the problem we are in need of solving.

Radical individualism involves the corrosion of people's sense of themselves as defined by a variety of strong affiliations and unchosen bonds and its replacement by a sense that all connections are matters of individual choice and preference. It breaks up clusters of people into isolated units. Politically, such individualism tends to weaken mediating power centers that stand between the individual and the nation as a whole—from families to local communities (including local governments), schools, religious institutions, fraternal bodies, civil-society organizations, labor groups, and the small and medium-sized businesses that comprise much of the private economy. In their place, it strengthens individuals on the one hand and a central government on the other, since such a government is most able to treat individuals equally by treating them all impersonally. For this reason, a hyper-individualist culture is likely to be governed by a hyper-centralized government, and each is likely to exacerbate the worst inclinations of the other.

Some of the most distinctive problems of our era—the detachment from family, work, faith, and community, and the persistent patterns of bifurcated concentration throughout the American experience—are in important respects functions of a view of society as consisting only of individuals and a state, and are particularly difficult for a nation that often understands itself that way to address. That view of society after all itself advances precisely a form of bifurcated concentration, seeking to empower the individual and the central government and disempower everything in between.

The problems we confront therefore call for solutions that somehow reinvigorate the middle layers of society, and resuscitate our mediating institutions. Those institutions may be the ones most capable of addressing the characteristic problems of our diffusing society—and the isolation and loneliness that are such prominent symptoms of so many of those problems—without requiring the kind of wholesale national reconsolidation and re-centralization that simply aren't plausible now. They might better allow us to pursue diversity without atomism, profusion without isolation, and a great variety of ways of life without estrangement from the sources of human flourishing.

This would seem to make *subsidiarity*—the entrusting of power and authority to the lowest and least centralized institutions capable of using them well—a key to addressing the particular problems of our age of individualism. The empowerment of a diverse array of mediating institutions, as opposed to a single, central national authority, was always one important way of dealing with the multiplicity and diffusion of American life before the intense consolidation of the early 20th century, and modernized forms of that approach to social life must now come to serve that purpose again.

Subsidiarity can allow for a pluralism of communities, and so avoid the worst excesses of both conformism and individualism. It can liberate people to pursue the good as they understand it together with others who share their understanding. But precisely by enabling people to be ensconced in a dense web of community rather than alone in the great mass of the public, it can also afford them the opportunity to benefit from moral order and structure and from the aid and love and support that can only be extended at the level of the person.

This does not mean that devolution or federalism offers some magic cure to our problems. But it suggests that we should allow an inclination toward subsidiarity to influence our foremost policy debates. That means bringing to public policy the kind of dispersed, incremental, bottom-up approach to progress that increasingly pervades every other part of American life—an approach that lets authority flow through our mediating institutions, and that solves problems by giving people options and letting their choices drive the process.

Over the past decade and more, ideas rooted in this kind of vision have been developed and refined by a circle of generally younger, policy-minded conservatives. From health care to education to welfare, taxation, regulation, and across the full spectrum of domestic affairs, they have worked to turn this vision into substantive policy proposals.

A similarly decentralized and community oriented progressivism is also imaginable—and we have seen forms of it emerge in our politics from time to time, perhaps most recently in the 1990s. It certainly might come less naturally at first to today's Left in America. But it could draw upon a rich tradition of progressive localism and community and labor organizing that points in a rather different direction than much of what the American left has emphasized in recent years.

Beyond the familiar applications of this kind of approach—in school choice, say, or in some conservative approaches to health care reform—there are ways that forms of decentralization could be of some use in taking on some of the distinct problems of this particular time. It could help, at least at the margins but maybe also near the core, to combat wage stagnation and the loss of working class jobs for instance by enabling experimentation not only with welfare and wage supports but with different forms of labor law and worker organizing and by encouraging competition in higher education and skills training that can create new opportunities.

It could help us meet the challenge of better enabling economic mobility, as well, by allowing for experimentation with various approaches to assisting Americans in need. Experimentation, after all, is what you do when you do not know the answer. And it is hard to deny that when it comes to our most profound socioeconomic problems in America, we do not have a reliable formula for effective help. The challenge facing welfare reformers is daunting: They have to find ways to help people who lack not only money but often also stable families, functional communities, and decent schools. They have to encourage work and responsibility while offering aid, and they often have to help people break bad habits or confront addiction or abuse while also respecting their dignity and independence. This can't be done by a government check. Welfare often works best when it is accompanied by advice, by obligations, and by evident compassion at a personal level. Using public resources to let different institutions—from state social agencies to local civic groups to churches and nonprofits—try different ways of meeting this challenge in different

circumstances is what we need to do when solutions are not clear, and when it isn't clear that any one solution will suffice in different circumstances. That kind of policy logic, the logic of subsidiarity, would serve us well in many arenas.

And what about national unity? Decentralization might easily seem like a force for more fragmentation and division, not for unity. But that would be true if the alternative were a cohesive and consolidated polity. Because the real alternative in the lives of many Americans today is actually isolation and a radical individualism, a more decentralized politics can work to draw people out of their narrow circles and into the public arena—toward a common space where Americans can see each other face to face, and where not every question has to be an all-or-nothing political fight to the death in Washington.

So subsidiarity, federalism, and decentralization can be a focal point for an agenda of renewal that emphasizes social capital. And given the sorry shape of national politics in America, that kind of focus might attract progressives and conservatives alike.

By beginning closer to the ground, we can start to focus again on what holds us together. Champions of localism and subsidiarity in America love to cite Edmund Burke's reference to the "little platoons" that make up a society. But we would be wise to remember the context in which that line arises for Burke. It's not a case for fragmentation but for unity. "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society," Burke wrote, "is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love of our country, and of mankind."

That first link is broken in the lives of many Americans today. And given the particular shape of our problems, we might begin to repair it by taking on more problems where they are found and thinking about politics from the bottom up a little more. This is surely part of what it would mean to take social capital seriously, and to see that the healing our country now badly needs could be made easier if we found ways to lower the temperature of our national debates and instead allow what happens in our near-at-hand communities to matter more.

Ultimately, the ability of public policy (and particularly national public policy) to address the kinds of problems that bedevil countless American communities today is limited. Policymakers in Washington should recognize that, and should avoid building unreasonable expectations or making impossible promises. Politics cannot solve our country's 21st century dilemmas. But it can play a role in helping us to solve them. And it can begin to play that role by coming to understand the purpose of government as enabling Americans to better help one another. Politics can help, in other words, by taking social capital seriously.

I am enormously encouraged, therefore, by your decision to hold this hearing, and enormously grateful to be invited to take part.

"What We Do Together: The State of Social Capital in America Today"
Joint Economic Committee
May 17, 2017
Testimony of Mario L. Small,
Grafstein Family Professor of Sociology at Harvard University

Chairman Tiberi, Vice Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and other members of the committee, I thank you for the invitation. I appreciate the opportunity to help begin a discussion of how better understanding social capital can help Congress both identify problems facing the nation and develop potential solutions.

I will make three points. First, social capital is a characteristic not just of nations but also of individuals. Second, individuals who have access to and who use their social capital have been shown to do better, by multiple measures, than those who do not. Third, recent studies suggest that early education and childcare programs may be an especially effective venue to help low-income parents generate social capital. This social capital may, in turn, benefit both parents and children. I will focus much of my testimony on the potential for early education and childcare programs to increase the social capital, and overall wellbeing, of low-income parents and children.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is a characteristic not only of nations but also of individuals
To have a productive conversation about social capital, it is important to be clear that the term can refer to a characteristic of either nations or individuals.[1] As a characteristic of nations, social capital has been understood as a country's degree of connectedness, sense of community, and civic participation. There is an ongoing debate over whether this kind of social capital has declined over the last forty or fifty years in American society. There is strong evidence that some practices have declined—these include participation in voluntary organization and several forms of informal but important social engagement, such as joining bowling leagues and hosting dinner parties.[2] There is also strong evidence that some conditions have not declined—these include the number of confidants people report and the degree to which people spend time with friends.[3] And there is also strong evidence that some practices have increased—a notable example is the extent of participation in political communities outside one's local neighborhood or town.[4] The debate over whether the nation's social capital has declined is ongoing.

Most of my comments will be about the social capital not of nations but of individuals. In this context, social capital refers to the resources that individuals have access to by virtue of their social

[1] Portes, Alejandro, 1998, "Social Capital: Its Meaning and Applications in Modern Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24:1-24; Portes, Alejandro, 2000, "The Two Meanings of Social Capital," *Sociological Forum*, 15(1):1-12.
[2] Putnam, Robert, 2000, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster).
[3] Fischer, Claude, 2011, *Still Connected* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation).
[4] Rainie, Lee and Barry Wellman, 2012, *Networked* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

networks.[5] These "resources" can be of many different kinds.[6] I focus on three resources that are especially important: information, social support, and the reinforcement of social norms.[7]

To avoid ambiguity, I will use an example. Consider someone who has decided, after reaching an age milestone, that they must now take exercise seriously. The person joins a gym and begins lifting weights, with the objective of attaining, and maintaining, a strength milestone while remaining injury-free. In this venture, the beginning weight-lifter has some unknown probability of success. Social capital theory would suggest that the probability increases to the extent that the lifter can access and make use of social capital from her or his networks. Specifically, the person is more likely to succeed if he or she finds a partner, because of three resources, or kinds of social capital, available from that connection, (a) information, (b) social support, and (c) the reinforcement of social norms.

(a) Consider information. The beginning weightlifter will have some knowledge about nutrition, proper form, and other matters essential to a successful weightlifting program. So will the partner. Each is also likely to consult the internet, doctors, and others. As a result, the lifter and the partner will each have some information that the other does not have on matters essential to their objective, such as how much weight to lift during each session, how to ensure good nutrition, and how to avoid injury. This information will increase the lifter's odds of success.

(b) Consider social support. While a person can lift weights alone, having a partner means having access to a valuable form of support. Weight-lifters call a "spotter" a person who stands near the lifter to assist with the weights in case the lifter is unable to complete a repetition. A person lifting with a spotter has a kind of support that helps the lifter reduce injury rates and press heavier weights, again increasing the odds of success.

(c) Consider the reinforcement of norms. To succeed in a new weight-lifting venture, a person must stick to a routine. Doing so can be difficult, and the presence of a partner helps reinforce the importance of sticking to the routine. A lifter having a difficult morning is less likely to skip the pre-dawn trek to the gym if he or she knows that the partner will be there waiting. The consistency produced by the reinforcement of norms also increases the odds of success.

These three resources—information, social support, and the reinforcement of norms—are not money; they are not economic capital. They are social capital. It is important to note that social capital is unlikely to be a substitute for economic capital in many contexts, particularly among low-income individuals. For many objectives, money is a necessary condition of success. For example, the lifter must be able to afford the necessary changes in nutrition, new clothing, shoes, and gym membership. But social capital can also be essential, as it increases the odds that a person who has already committed to an objective—whether it is finding a job, managing the difficulties of poverty,

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[5] Bourdieu, Pierre, 1986, "The Forms of Capital," pages 241-58 in J.G. Richardson (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood); Coleman, James, 1988, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology*, 94:S95-S120.

[6] Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital"; Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital"; Portes, "Social Capital"; Lin, Nan, 2001, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press). Researchers have debated whether certain resources, such as social support, should be labeled "social capital"; however, there is little debate at this point over whether the resources themselves matter.

[7] Small, Mario, 2009, *Unanticipated Gains* (New York: Oxford University Press).

returning to school after childbearing, or something else—will succeed. Many people have difficulty attaining their own objectives because of insufficient social capital.

There are times when commentators have used the term "social capital" to refer to core values such as the importance of hard work, marriage, or education. However, values and social capital are different things. Values are beliefs; social capital is a tool. People can strongly value something but have difficulty achieving it in the absence of effective tools. Just as the weightlifter my fail not out of lack of motivation but out of lack of social capital, so may a highly motivated person pursuing other life goals have difficulty meeting them due to a lack of information, support, or norm-reinforcement available through social networks. In fact, some cognitive psychologists have suggested that poverty makes it especially difficult to attain goals because the mind is concerned constantly with the perils of poverty.[8] In such contexts, social capital can be an especially valuable tool.

Individuals with greater social capital tend to do better

The social scientific evidence supports the claim that social capital is as beneficial as the analogy I have used suggests. At this point, the evidence is overwhelming that access to information, social support, and reinforced norms from social networks makes a difference in people's lives, affecting their economic, physical, and mental wellbeing. For example, researchers have documented extensively that social networks help people get jobs and move up the occupational ladder, because of the information the networks provide.[9] Similarly, they have documented repeatedly that social networks help buffer against the physical and mental health consequences of major life stressors, because of the social support the networks provide.[10]

Nevertheless, there is probably no effective way for government to increase people's social capital by telling them they should. Even informing people of the benefits of social capital is unlikely to be sufficient, since the demands of work and family life that many people experience today means that few of them believe they have extra time to make friends for the sake of their likely benefits. However, it is possible for effective policy to help individuals in targeted contexts to develop networks with beneficial social capital.

I will devote the rest of my testimony to discussing evidence that suggests that early education and childcare programs may be a powerful venue to improve conditions for not only children but also parents; I will show that mothers who enroll their children in such programs often generate social capital, that this social capital is beneficial, and that there is reason to believe that targeted interventions may help such programs maximize these benefits.

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[8] Mullainathan, Sendhil and Eldar Shafir, 2013, *Scarcity* (New York: Henry Holt and Company).

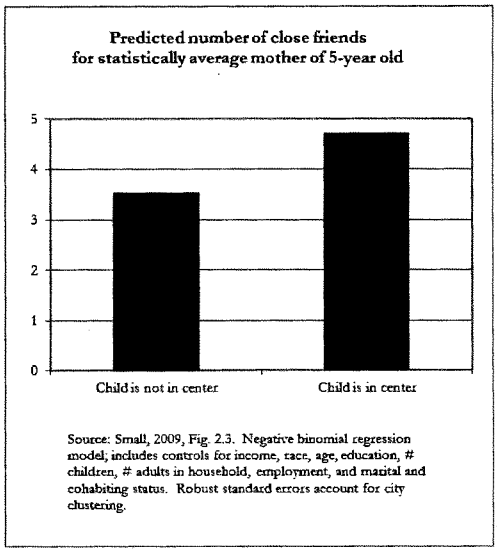
[9] Burt, Ronald, 1992, *Structural Holes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press); Granovetter, Mark, 1995, *Getting a Job*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); Brian Rubineau and Roberto M. Fernandez, 2017, "How Do Labor Markets Work?" In *Emerging Trends in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, edited by Robert A. Scott and Marlis Buchmann (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc .).

[10] Berkman, Lisa F., and S. Leonard Syme, 1979. "Social Networks, Host Resistance, and Mortality: A Nine-Year Follow-up Study of Alameda County Residents," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 109(2):186–204; House, James S., Karl R. Landis, and Debra Umberson, 1988, "Social Relationships and Health," *Science* 241(4865):540–45.

CHILDCARE CENTERS

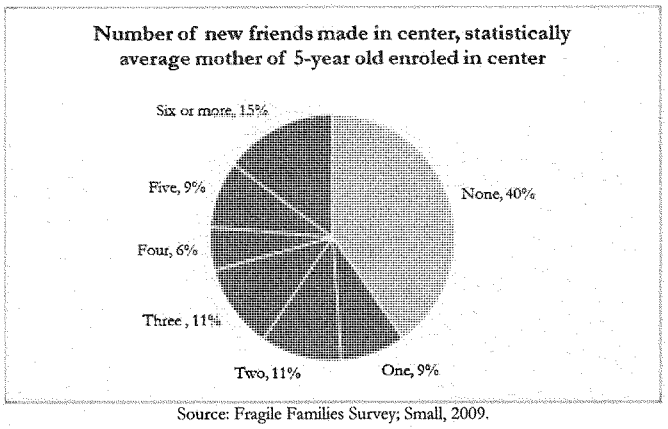
Mothers who enroll their children in childcare centers tend to have greater social capital
For the sake of brevity, I will use the term "childcare center" to describe daycare, pre-school, Head Start, and early-education centers, even though these entities differ widely in the kinds of services they provide. Enrolling a child in a childcare center may expand a mother's network of close friends. This was the conclusion of a recent study based on a nationally representative survey of urban mothers of young children.[11]

The survey, the Fragile Families Study, asked all mothers, regardless of whether they used childcare centers, how many close friends they had. A comparison of mothers whose children were enrolled in a center ("enrolled mothers") and those who were not ("non-enrolled mothers") shows major differences. The comparison is based on a statistical analysis that adjusted for variables affecting whether mothers were likely to enroll their children in centers in the first place.[12] As shown in the figure below, statistically average enrolled mothers have about 4.7 close friends; non-enrolled mothers have about 3.5 close friends. This difference of 1.2 friends is statistically significant.[13]



[11] These and all figures in the following sections are reported in Small, 2009.
[12] The variables are income, race, age, education, number of children, number of adults in the household, employment status, marital and cohabiting status, and city location. The estimates also adjust statistically for several important elements of the survey design.
[13] If these models are re-estimated after adjusting for whether the mother had specifically made friends in the center, the difference is reduced to 0.2 friends and no longer statistically significant. This finding is consistent with the idea that enrolled mothers have more friends specifically because of the friends they made in centers.

These results are based on survey, not experimental, data. They cannot definitively state that enrolling in a center causes the average mother to increase her network size. However, the observational data make clear that the activities in the centers themselves must be part of the story. As shown in the figure below, 60% of mothers who enrolled their child in a pre-school, daycare, or pre-kindergarten made at least one new friend there; 51% made two or more friends; 40% made three or more. Most mothers in childcare make friends there, and many of them expand their social networks dramatically. In addition, statistically adjusting for whether the mother made a friend in the center eliminates the observed difference between enrolled and non-enrolled mothers, which is consistent with the idea that enrolled mothers have more friends precisely because they made them in the centers (rather than because they were more likely to expand their network even if they had not enrolled in a center).



Source: Fragile Families Survey; Small, 2009.

A different way of understanding this question is by considering the extent of social isolation, the probability of having no close friends whatsoever. The story is similar. Very few mothers, fewer than 10% of the nationally-representative sample, are this radically isolated, so the question is whether enrolling in a center reduces that probability even further. As shown below, this appears to be the case. The predicted probability of having no close friends is about 8% for a non-enrolled mother, and 6% for an enrolled mother. The reduction, which is about 25% of the baseline probability, is statistically significant.[14]

[14] As before, adjusting for whether friends were made in centers reduced the difference and rendered it statistically insignificant.

Predicted probabiliy of being socially isolated, urban mothers of 5-year olds

Child is in center	5.8%
Child is not in center	7.7%

Difference statistically significant at 0.05 level.
Source: Small, 2009, Table 2.2. Logistic regression model; includes controls for income, race, age, education, # children, # adults in household, employment, and marital and cohabiting status. Robust standard errors account for city clustering

In sum, most mothers with children in childcare centers make friends there, and these friends are associated with an increase in size of the close network and a reduction in probability of being socially isolated.

Ethnographic data and survey data on center directors make clear that mothers expand their networks in part because of the opportunities for interaction provided by field trips, spring cleanings, fundraising events, and all of the parent meetings required to make such activities happen.[15] The centers most effective at creating social capital host many such activities, and these are often, if not primarily, organized by parents themselves. The centers most effective at generating social capital are hubs of activity, but these activities are not there for the sake of creating social capital; they are there because the centers have committed to numerous fieldtrips and other activities that, in order to be successful, require parental participation. Centers that do a lot require parents to get involved. Involvement, in turn, generates social capital.

The social capital created in centers appears to reduce material hardship

These networks make a difference. My research has examined two separate indicators of wellbeing, material hardship and mental hardship, and the evidence suggests that the social capital generated through the connections in childcare centers helps reduce the former among low-income households and the latter among all mothers. Consider, first, material hardship.

Overall material hardship

An important indicator of wellbeing is the experience, or avoidance, of material hardship. The standard measure of poverty in place since the 1960s has been known for years to measure only crudely the true material hardship that individuals face, such as their inability to obtain food or housing. For example, the value of real estate has risen dramatically over the past 50 years, outpacing inflation. Rent and mortgage costs account for a greater share of the incomes of middle- and low-income populations than they did a generation or two ago. For this and other reasons, examining the actual experience of material hardship is a clearer indicator of the difficulties associated with low incomes.

[15] Small, 2009, Chapter 3.

Acquiring the resources needed to avoid or reduce material hardship is not simply a matter of having enough income. In fact, there are many ways to acquire such resources. Researchers have found that income may account for as little as a quarter of the variation in material hardship (measured by food, housing, and health care insecurity).[16] People use resources such as food banks and soup kitchens, Medicaid, and emergency utility coverage to avoid material hardship. However, people have to know these resources exist and know how to obtain them, and networks are effective means to acquire such information. The data suggests that the networks mothers form in childcare centers help them acquire such resources.

Material hardship is not rare among households with young children. The table below exhibits the weighted proportion of respondents in the national survey who experienced each of eight different measures of material hardship in the year roughly encompassing the focal child's age 4 to 5. The first four measures identify home-related hardship. Eleven percent of mothers, for example, did not pay the full amount of rent at least once; small proportions of mothers—fewer than 10%—were forced to move in with others or into a shelter. Recent research suggests that the 2008 collapse of credit markets might have led to particularly high rates of housing instability and eviction.[17] A very small proportion of households needed but were unable to receive the care of a doctor. The larger proportions are in the subsequent measures, which indicate whether the mother did not pay the utility bills or had to borrow money from friends or family to pay such bills. While the proportion that was forced to borrow in order to pay bills is relatively high at about 22%, the proportion that had their gas or electricity cut off is relatively low, probably due to protections in many local laws against cutting some utilities as well as emergency utility coverage provided by local governments.

[16] Mayer, Susan E. and Christopher Jencks, 1989, "Poverty and the Distribution of Material Hardship." *Journal of Human Resources* 24(1):88–114.
[17] Desmond, Matthew, 2016, *Evicted* (New York: Crown).

Experience of hardship over the previous twelve months, households with 5-year olds, as reported by mothers

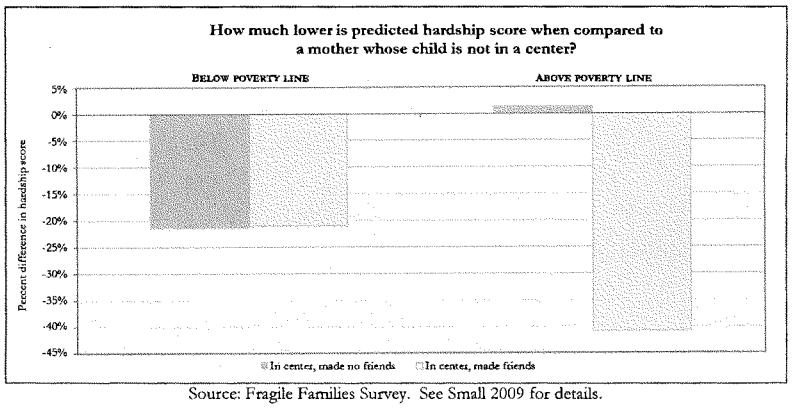
Measure of hardship	*Proportion of households*
1. Did not pay the full amount of rent or mortgage payments	11.3%
2. Was evicted from home or apartment for not paying the rent or mortgage	2.2%
3. Moved in with other people even for a little while because of financial probems	6.5%
4. Stayed in a shelter, abandoned building, automobile, or other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night	2.8%
5. Needed to see doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of cost (anyone in household)	3.3%
6. Did not pay the full amount of a gas, oil, or electricity bill	17.5%
7. Borrowed money from family or friends to help pay the bills	21.9%
8. Had gas or electricity cutoff, or heating oil not delivered by company, because there wasn't enough money to pay the bills	3.9%
9. Was hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford enough food	5.0%

Source: Fragile Families Survey; Small 2009. Households may be single or dual-headed.

Assessing fully whether the social capital built in childcare centers helps households reduce hardship requires multiple methods, including both surveys and randomized control trials. At the moment, I know of no such trials. However, the survey data suggest that social capital helps reduce material hardship.

The indicators discussed above were used to create a standard material hardship scale in which each indicator was worth one point.[18] To determine based on survey data whether enrolling in centers helps mothers reduce their hardship score, it is important to take into account the possibility of "selection bias" from unobserved factors. The figures below follow a lagged dependent variable model approach, which involves statistically accounting not only for the demographic variables known to matter but also for the mother's wellbeing prior to enrolling in the center. This approach greatly increases confidence that the effect is not biased due to selection, since it explicitly takes into account how well mothers were doing before the time of enrollment, thereby accounting for fundamental but time-invariant unobserved differences. The models also take into account differences in mothers' natural sociability or propensity to form friends by adjusting for the number of friends they had in general (regardless of whether they were formed in centers).

[18] This is a more logical strategy than performing factor analysis. The items in the scale measure different types of hardship; they are not elements of a single underlying construct. As Mayer and Jencks (1989:98) argue, the "items that compose the hardship measures are not supposed to measure the same underlying construct, so we cannot estimate the measure's reliability from the inter-item correlations, any more than we could estimate the reliability of an income measure from the intercorrelations among various kinds of income." To include the "lagged" measure of hardship from the earlier wave, the indicators of hardship had to be restricted to those questions included in both waves of the survey; measures 1 through 7 fit this criterion. For details, see Small, 2009.



Source: Fragile Families Survey. See Small 2009 for details.

The figure shows how much lower the enrolled household's predicted hardship score is when compared to non-enrolled households, as reported by the mothers. The figure separates those living below and above the federal poverty line. As shown, among households below the poverty line the predicted hardship score is about 20% lower for mothers enrolled in centers than for non-enrolled mothers, both for those who made friends in centers and those who did not.[19] Among households above the poverty line, the predicted hardship score is about 40% lower when mothers enrolled in centers and expanded their networks there. (The percent reduction is large among non-poor mothers because far fewer of them are likely to experience hardship in the first place, so the difference is based on a much smaller baseline.[20])

Note that for low-income mothers, enrolling a child in a center reduces the predicted hardship score regardless of whether they made friends there. This result appears to be due to the fact that centers serving low-income children, such as Head Start centers, often connect parents to service-providing organizations in their communities. This kind of social capital, which results from organizational rather than social ties, also represents a valuable resource to the poor.

Specific measures of material hardship: housing

Some of the indicators of hardship in the table above measure hardship imperfectly. For example, the first measure asks whether the mother did not pay the rent or mortgage at least once during the previous twelve months. Sometimes, people do not pay their rent or mortgage because they do not have the money to do so. But sometimes, they simply forget. Other times, people decide to withhold payment, such as renters who want to punish the landlord for not fixing the radiator, or those generally exercising their legal rights in the face of neglectful management. Therefore, while

[19] The differences between each condition and the baseline are marginally significant, at the .06 level for making not friends in the center vs. not being in the center, and at the .09 level for making friends there vs. not being in a center. Among enrolled mothers, there is no statistically significant difference between the effects of enrolling while making friends and enrolling while not making friends.

[20] For full analysis, see Small, 2009.

some measures of hardship indicate material *difficulty*, others confound material difficulty with other conditions. There are three indicators of actual housing difficulty: being evicted, having to move in with friends or family, or having to move to a shelter or sleep in an abandoned building or in a car. Four percent of non-poor mothers, and 16% of poor mothers reported experiencing at least one indicator of true housing difficulty.

The following analysis shows the relationship between center enrollment and actual experience of housing difficulty.[21] The table focuses only on low-income mothers, and is based on statistical analyses that account for the variables described earlier. It shows that the probability of experiencing one of those forms of housing-related hardship is lower for a statistically average enrolled poor mother than for one not enrolled, even after taking into account *prior* experience of these difficulties.

Predicted probability of experiencing housing-related hardship for a statistically average urban poor mother of a 5-year old	
Child not in center	8.8%
Child in center, mother made no friends	3.9%
Child in center, mother made friends	4.0%

Source: Fragile Families Survey; Small 2009, Table 2.4. Logistic regression model; includes all previous controls plus total number of close friends and lagged version of the dependent variable. Robust standard errors account for city clustering.

Specific measures of material hardship: utilities

As with housing, people may have failed to pay a bill for a number of reasons, not merely because they could not afford it. The table below limits hardship indicators about utilities to borrowing money in order to pay bills and having one's utilities cut off, both of which denote actual difficulty. The table presents results of a model estimating the probability of experiencing either of the two purest forms of utilities hardship for a statistically average poor mother. All previous controls are included, including prior utilities-related hardship.[22]

[21] The first four measures in the earlier table are indicators of housing-related hardship. The first, which asks mothers whether rent or mortgage was paid, is clearly the least pure indicator of hardship. The remaining three are appropriate measures, since they indicate eviction, which is not a person's choice; having to move in with others *because of* financial difficulty; and staying in a shelter, an abandoned building, a car, or some other place not meant for regular housing.

[22] Since there was no measure in the previous wave for item 8 (having one's utility cut off), the lagged dependent variable is only for whether they borrowed money in order to pay the bills.

Predicted probability of experiencing utilities-related hardship for a statistically average urban poor mother of a 5-year old

Child not in center	33.3%
Child in center, mother made no friends	30.5%
Child in center, mother made friends	26.8%

Source: Fragile Families Survey, Small, 2009, Table 2.5. Logistic regression model; includes all previous controls plus total number of close friends and lagged version of the dependent variable. Robust standard errors account for city clustering.

As the table makes clear, the statistically average urban poor mother has between a 25% and 35% probability of experiencing material hardship with regard to her utilities. The probability is lower if her child is in a childcare center, and even lower if she made friends there. The social capital effect is statistically significant.[23]

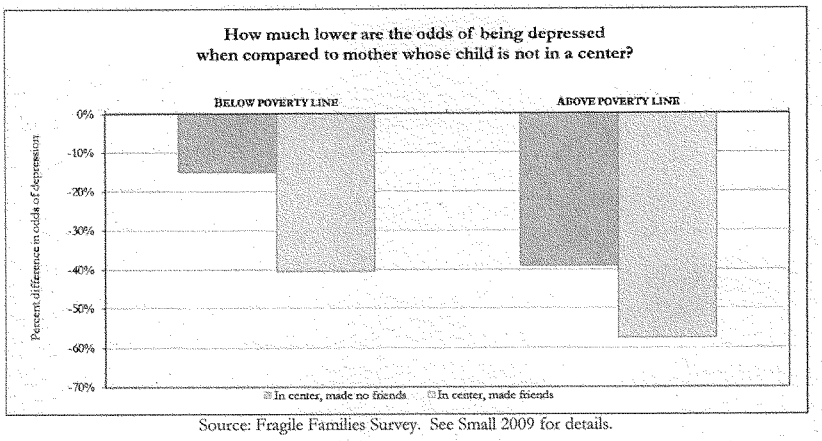
In sum, the findings suggest that social networks developed by mothers in childcare centers help reduce material hardship. The ethnographic evidence suggests that the networks provide information and social support, two forms of social capital, that help mothers temper some of the negative consequences of poverty. It also suggests that the organizations to which centers such as Head Starts are connected provide valuable information and resources to low-income parents. I now consider the relationship between social capital and mental hardship.

The social capital created in centers appears to reduce mental hardship

Depression affects the ability to maintain a job, raise children, and contribute productively to the functioning of society. Respondents to the survey were asked a series of eight diagnostic questions to ascertain the experience of a major depressive episode over the previous twelve months. The questions were derived from the Composite International Diagnostic Interview, Short Form, Section A.[24] Respondents who reported seven symptoms for half a day or who reported taking depression medication were counted as depressed. The figure below assesses the predicted odds of being depressed, controlling for prior depression and for friendliness, as before. It compares mothers in centers, and those who made friends there, to those who did not.

[23] Nevertheless, the effect of being enrolled does not attain the level of statistical significance if the mother made no friends in the center; if she did, the difference is marginally significant at the 0.09 level. Mothers may use centers to acquire resources from the state. For example, in New York City, the Home Energy Assistance Program "assists low-income households with their fuel and /or utility costs. Emergency assistance is also available to HEAP-eligible households that pay directly for heat and are faced with "shut-off" notices. The Department for the Aging also administers the Weatherization, Referral and Packaging Program (WRAP) which provides low-income senior homeowners with free home energy-related services that can lower energy bills and increase the comfort of their homes. For more information or to apply, please call 311." New York City Department for the Aging. Frequently Asked Questions. http://home2.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/faq/faq.shtml. Accessed 7/23/06.

[24] Kessler, Ronald C., Hans-Ulrich Wittchen, Jamie M. Abelson, Katherine Mcgonagle, Norbert Schwarz, Kenneth S. Kendler, Barbel Knauper, and Shangyang Zhao, 1998, "Methodological Studies of the Composite International Diagnostic Interview in the US National Comorbidity Survey." *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research* 7(1):33--55. The entire interview is not conducted. Instead, a portion of the interviews are used, and, on this basis, estimates are created of the probability that the respondent would be categorized as depressed if given the full interview.



Source: Fragile Families Survey. See Small 2009 for details.

The effect of enrolling in a center is statistically significant only when mothers made friends there. The effect is large. The odds of being depressed are between 40% and 55% lower for mothers who enrolled in centers and made friends there than for comparable mothers who did not enroll in centers, even after taking into account their history of depression and their latent friendliness. As in all other results, randomized control trials would be necessary to ascertain whether there are true causal effects. However, the findings are consistent with the many studies across the social sciences suggesting that social capital effects are real.

The social capital created in centers can be used to increase attendance

Though government cannot tell people whom to be friends with, social policy in early education and care programs can affect whether people have greater opportunities to create valuable social capital. A recent intervention in a Head Start center suggests this possibility. A team of researchers developed an innovative pilot study to examine whether a near-zero-cost intervention that did not overly burden parents could increase social capital and maximize children's attendance. The results of the pilot study, published last fall, were promising.[25]

For Head Start to work, children need to attend classes consistently. When attendance is low, children are naturally less exposed to the education needed for kindergarten readiness. In addition, when children are enrolled but not attending class they still occupy slots that could have been taken up by other children, which is an inefficient use of resources. Maximizing Head Start attendance makes both educational and economic sense by improving cognitive development and reducing waste.

[25] Sommer, Teresa Eckrich, Terri J. Sabol, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Mario Small, Henry Wilde, Sean Brown & Zong Yang Huang, 2016, "Promoting Parents' Social Capital to Increase Children's Attendance in Head Start: Evidence From an Experimental Intervention," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* (online first). See also, "The Two Generation-Approach," http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/pages/the-two-generation-approach.

The intervention was conducted in a large, 18-classroom Head Start center that had experienced problems maintaining high attendance. At the center, average daily attendance over the course of the previous years had typically exhibited a u-shaped pattern: it was high in September; it dipped gradually to its lowest point in February; it and climbed back up slowly and not quite fully in May. (It began to dip again in June as families began their summer vacations.) At its lowest point, the average daily attendance rate, or the proportion of children who attended each day, was around 70%.

Sometimes, low-income parents have difficulty meeting the objective of maximizing their children's attendance as a result of a lack of social capital, particularly social support and norm reinforcement from other parents, because unexpected emergencies often faced by the poor get in the way of transporting their children to the center. The intervention was designed to promote parental social capital and, in turn, to increase attendance. When families arrived over the summer and fall to enroll their children for the academic year, they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions.

(a) Families in the first condition were assigned to a neighborhood classroom, one in which all children were residents of the same neighborhood, one of four neighborhoods served by the center. Parents were informed that children in their classroom were of the same neighborhood. Sharing a neighborhood with other parents might make it easier to ask one of them to take one's child to the center in case of an emergency (social support).

(b) Families in the second condition were also assigned to a neighborhood classroom; in addition, they were given the opportunity to form a partnership with another parent to help maximize attendance. To do so, the center held a few social gatherings at the beginning of the year to allow parents to select an "attendance buddy." No parents were required to select attendance buddies; about half of them chose to do so.[26] In addition, attendance buddies had no formal requirement; parents were merely asked to let their attendance buddy know if they would be unable to attend on a particular day (norm reinforcement and the possibility of social support).

(c) Families in the third condition, the control, were merely assigned to a classroom as the center normally had, wherein children in the classroom hailed from all neighborhoods in the service area.

In all three conditions, parents held the regular meetings with teachers and other parents that were part of the Head Start operation. For parents in all three conditions, social capital was measured in the early fall and in the late spring. Attendance was recorded daily.

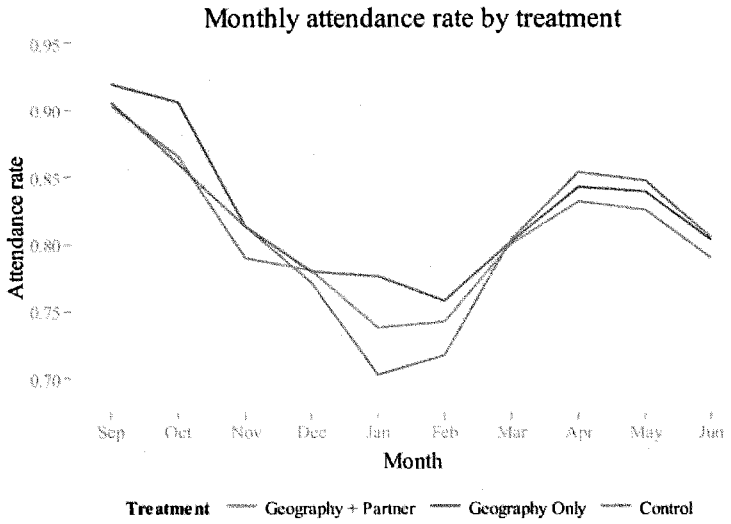
The results were promising. First, the intervention increased access to social capital dramatically. Parents assigned to the second condition increased their personal network by about one person, from a baseline number of about 3 people. The effect was statistically significant. In addition, parents assigned to either treatment condition increased the number of other parents in the center whom they were willing to ask for help (with taking care of their child, for information on doctors, or for a loan).[27] The increase was about three parents, from a baseline of about four. That is, the

[26] "All participants in the combined treatment group were invited to attend a kick-off meeting in which they learned the broad goals of the program and socialized with other parents in their child's classroom in order to begin to form partnerships. In most cases, parents selected partners voluntarily. In a few instances, family support staff assigned parent pairs (e.g., when both parents missed the orientation meeting)" (Sommer et al 2016:11).

[27] "For willingness to ask for help, parents were given a list of all children in the classroom and were then asked to

intervention dramatically increased both the number of people in parents' networks and their willingness to go to others for help.

Second, the intervention produced moderate but statistically significant increases in attendance during the most difficult months of the year. The intervention produced no effects in the fall or spring. But in the winter, where attendance was typically lowest, children in the first and second treatment conditions had between 5% and 7% greater average daily attendance, a statistically significant result.



Source: Sommer et al. 2016. "Geography" refers to assignment to a neighborhood classroom

The intervention was small in scale and exploratory in nature. Still, the results are promising, because the cost of this intervention was close to zero dollars, and it made no extraordinary request of parents. Even minimal investments, a slightly more intensive request, and a refined program are likely to produce much stronger effects. A larger intervention might determine whether the federal government can maximize the effectiveness of its early education dollars by mobilizing the power of social capital.

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indicate (yes/no) whether or not they would feel comfortable asking the child's parent or guardian: (a) to watch their child for an hour; (b) for information about a doctor; (c) for $200 as a loan.... The number of times a parent indicated "yes" for any of the three categories across all children in the classroom was summed within each category" (Sommer et al 2016:12).

CONCLUSION

Social capital matters. It can be particularly beneficial for low-income parents and children. At a time when the improvement and expansion of early education programs have been topics of serious policy debate, thinking more expansively about the role of parents may prove valuable.[28] Many early education programs try to get parents involved. However, what I have described is getting parents involved *with one another*. Mobilizing social capital involves making greater use of the resources that parents and their ability to connect with each other bring to the table. Social capital is no panacea, but creating opportunities for parents to expand their networks and supporting incentives for them to meet collective goals may prove beneficial for both parents and children. I recommend that Congress explore the potential of interventions focused on social capital in contexts such as early education programs.

[28] Heckman, James, 2006, "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children," *Science* 312:1900-02; Duncan, Greg and Katherine Magnuson, 2013, "Investing in Preschool Programs," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27(2):109-32.

RESPONSE FROM DR. PUTNAM TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARGARET WOOD HASSAN

HEARING QUESTION: OPPORTUNITY GAP IN EDUCATION

To Dr. Putnam:

- *Dr. Putnam, in your testimony and your book, "Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis," you quote a landmark study from Stanford sociologist Sean Reardon that shows a widening "class gap" in both math and reading scores among American kids.*
- *This study, along with your research in the book, and your testimony today speak to the fact that differences in success are not race-based, but result from differences in the opportunities children are provided.*
- *Can you address the difference between a racial gap and a class gap, and how do we as legislators work to close this opportunity gap?*

Inequality in the United States increasingly operates through education—a scarce resource in our knowledge based economy and a measure that is closely correlated with parental socioeconomic status. As Reardon's work shows, and my work broadly confirms, controlling for education, racial gaps in income, family structure and test scores, though still dismaying, are falling. On the other hand, racial gaps in schooling remain immense. Black parents in America remain disproportionately concentrated among the poor and less educated, so black children continue to be handicapped from the start. Whether their parents are rich or poor, black children live in poorer neighborhoods than white children at that income level, and black children experience less upward mobility and more downward mobility than their white counterparts who started at the same income level. So purely racial biases remain powerful, but as barriers to success they represent less burdensome obstacles for minority youth today than they did in the 1950s. By contrast, in modem America one barrier looms much larger than it did back then—class origins—and that barrier cuts across racial lines. Most racial disparities in opportunity today operate through class disparities. Action to address the growing class gap would brighten the prospects for disadvantaged kids of all races.

As I discussed in my written testimony, the growing class gap in opportunity has many sources—family stability, parenting, growing class segregation, access to supportive institutions from day care to neighborhoods to schools to extracurricular activities to post-secondary education. A broad menu of policy remedies for these issues is presented in the report "Closing the Opportunity Gap," prepared by a national, bipartisan group of experts that I chaired in 2016: *https://www.theopportunitygap.com/the-report/*. Among the most promising approaches are high-quality early childhood education, supports for low-income parents, improved mentoring, enhanced investment in low-income schools, and greater linking of the worlds of work and education. Many of those policy options are now being pursued by a nationwide coalition of scores of community foundations—from Seattle to Miami and Mobile to Duluth—led by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

HEARING QUESTION: WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

To Dr. Putnam:

- *One group that may not be reaping the benefits of social capital in the workplace is women, who can be left out of the network men are traditionally more able to take advantage of.*
- *Mr. Putnam I know that you've talked about bridging social capital, the bonds between groups—how should we be thinking about how we can help women build this capital in the workplace?*
- *Furthermore, what are ways that organizations can, or we can encourage organizations to bring women into these traditionally male-dominated networks so that they can be more properly represented throughout the hierarchy of the organizations?*

It is certainly true that access to high-quality social networks is increasingly essential to career success, as well as to life satisfaction more broadly. It is also true that while women have historically been better "networkers"—that is, more attuned to the importance of interpersonal connections and social capital—they have not had equal access to those informal professional networks that have had the highest economic payoff. Seeing the world through the "social capital lens" highlights the importance of access to such social networks.

That said, I am not an expert on gender in the workplace, so I do not consider myself professionally qualified to survey relevant evidence on this topic, still less to offer specific policy recommendations.

RESPONSE FROM DR. PUTNAM TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR

APPRENTICESHIPS

As a part of your work on social capital, you convened a group of 50 experts to identify possible approaches to narrow the opportunity gap. One of those areas is building stronger school-to-work linkages. I have been working to expand access apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs.

- *Dr. Putnam, in what ways can apprenticeship model be expanded to serve more high school students across the country?*

In responding to this question, I draw heavily on the report "Closing the Opportunity Gap," prepared by a national, bipartisan group of experts that I chaired in 2016: *https://www.theopportunitygap.com/the-report/*. Professor Katherine S. Newman chaired the working group on "On-Ramps for Success," and Professor Newman is herself a nationally recognized expert on apprenticeship.[1]

We need a more effective workforce-training system to equip today's youth with the skills needed to compete—one that starts early, by giving our youth more intentional and exciting exposure to the world of work.[2] This motivates them for the long educational road ahead and helps them choose courses or programs that would prepare them.[3] Other countries—especially Germany and Austria—do a better job of this, by (a) exposing all students to demanding career and technical education; (b) engaging employers, unions, and educational institutions in training that produces young people with certified, advanced skills; and (c) enabling serious and sustained exposure to work through apprenticeships, co-ops, internships, and planned experiences.

Many of us today think of vocational education as what it used to be, involving dull, undemanding classes in "shop" and "home economics" that are not strongly connected to future careers. But many high schools are now pioneering or furthering high-quality career and technical education (called CTE or CATE).[4] These programs can also engage students who learn better by doing, through applied and inductive learning. This CTE training prepares students for both college and careers, and should be made available to all (although more should be required for students im-

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[1] For much more depth on what high-quality vocational education and CTE look like, see K. Newman and H. Winston, Upskilling America: Learning to Labor in the 21st Century (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016).

[2] American middle and high schools sometimes have a "bring your daughter (or son) to work" day, but these are haphazard and limit students' exposure at best to their parents' occupations. Our group recommends exposing middle and high school students systematically to the world of work through short-term visits to help shape future choices and help students understand how academic coursework prepares them for later careers. This is the norm in Germany, where students from the eighth grade typically spend two weeks shadowing adults in factories and offices. Students should get information about career opportunities and the educational pathways these careers require. Beyond exposing young people to the work world, institutions need to develop more robust social networks that will assist kids born to less-educated families, who are less likely to have personal contacts in professional careers. Intermediary institutions (either volunteer or school-run) can help pair kids from less-educated families with a mentor-shadow in their desired careers. This exposure at a younger age will help illuminate career pathways and help students in high school decide if they want to go to college or start career preparation in high school.

[3] One example of this are individualized learning plans (ILPs) in middle school and high school. [This is different than the Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) that students in special education utilize.] Thirty-eight states have begun using ILPs with 21 states mandating them for all. An ILP is a step towards ensuring that all students leave high school both career- and college-ready. The ILP should involve discussions and/or diagnostic tests to evaluate student strengths and career interests. Once student career interests are established, the ILP links courses and post-secondary plans to a student's career goals and tracks the skills that a student has already developed towards being college- and career-ready. This ILP should also involve discussions of how extracurricular and out-of-school learning could further this skill development.

[4] See Newman and Winston, Upskilling America, 2016.

mediately going into careers). Successful examples include Career Academies,[5] High Schools that Work/Linked Learning, and Small Schools of Choice[6]:

Work-based learning: Apprenticeships that coordinate classroom and on-the-job learning can often create very helpful on-ramps. The practice is growing in the United States[7] but is still used far less than in some other counties (e.g., Germany and the UK). In Germany, and in most union-based U.S. models, an industry-educational group must agree on the competencies that a given apprenticeship must develop, and these competencies must have broader relevance beyond the specific employer. Non-union U.S. apprenticeships are typically more employer-specific. Apprentices also benefit because their on-the-job supervisor often unofficially serves as a career mentor or coach. Apprenticeships have worked in a wide range of settings in the U.S., including high-unionization (e.g., Wisconsin) and low-unionization environments (e.g., South Carolina).[8] To be successful, states or localities need to establish an intermediary to recruit schools and businesses to collaboratively train the talent needed for existing and new businesses. Community colleges are an obvious candidate for that role. In some cases, as in South Carolina or Georgia, businesses are offered small tax credits to participate as sites for apprentices—the cost of credits to the State is more than offset by tax revenues from graduates' downstream employment. Many apprenticeships enable students to earn college degrees while working, so that they can develop transferable skills if they decide to change jobs or fields.[9]

Our current "BA-for-all" policy has deprived many American youth of vital on-ramps to jobs. To bring about meaningful change, we recommend increasing early exposure to potential careers, to make all young Americans more thoughtful about where they want to head and how to get there. We also recommend developing pathways of the sort discussed in this report to help Americans realize the many respectable ways they can achieve a stable and comfortable living without the need for a four-year degree.

RESPONSE FROM DR. SMALL TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR

CHILDCARE CENTERS

Dr. Small, in your testimony, you noted that mothers who enroll their children in childcare centers tend to have greater social capital. In Minnesota, 75 percent of children live in a childcare desert, which means that these children do not live near high-quality, affordable childcare.

- *Can you discuss the benefits that childcare has for the parents as well as the children?*

For such a high proportion of children to not live near high-quality, affordable childcare is a serious problem. High-quality early childcare prepares children educationally at a crucial time in their development, helps families return to and maintain their participation in the labor force, and provides parents with the means for more effective parenting.

The value and significance of early education has been documented many times over. Education certainly benefits people at any point in the life course. But quality education in the early years has been shown to be essential for the long-term educational and economic success of children, yielding benefits for them and for society as a whole.[1]

Childcare also helps parents. Parents of young children often report that access to daycare helps them return to and participate fully in the workforce. The need

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[5] J. J. Kemple, "Career Academies: Long-Term Impacts on Work, Education, and Transitions to Adulthood," MDRC (2008).

[6] These 400 schools have considerable variation but all arose out of an innovation process, and all the schools provide closer student-faculty ties, stronger community partnerships, and rigorous academics.

[7] Note: there is a U.S. national office of registered apprenticeships that sets standards, provides grants, and encourages employer/education collaboration.

[8] South Carolina has attracted significant investment in new factories of German firms hungering for more skilled workers; some attribute this success to the value of apprenticeships, while others think it is the prevailing low-cost wage structure and right-to-work laws.

[9] For an example, see the Newport News (VA) Apprentice College described in ND Schwartz, "A New Look at Apprenticeships as a Path to the Middle Class," New York Times (July 13, 2015).

[1] See James J. Heckman, 2006, "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children," Science 312(5782):1900–02.

is especially important for low-income families, where financial needs or work requirements create strong demand for childcare.

In fact, childcare can help parents become better parents. Researchers have documented that enrolling their children in childcare centers provides parents with access to a network of other parents, teachers, and organizations that provide social support and other resources from the private and public sectors.[2] For this reason, research has shown that low-income households suffer significantly less material hardship after enrolling their children in childcare centers than comparable households that do not, even after taking into account their prior hardship.[3] Mothers in those households also experience significantly better mental health, because of the social supports developed.[4] As a result, we can expect them to be stronger and more effective parents.

Any society that hopes to remain competitive in the twenty-first century must find ways of providing access to high-quality early care and education.

RESPONSE FROM DR. SMALL TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY RANKING MEMBER MARTIN HEINRICH

1) We've heard quite a bit of discussion about whether American culture is in decline, how that could be impacting economic growth, and what role Congress could play. Could you expand on your views on this question?

The idea that American culture is in decline owes more to nostalgia than to a clear reading of the facts. Over the past generation or two, some forms of social capital have declined, such as participation in some kinds of activities (e.g., bowling leagues) and some forms of civic engagement. However, others have increased, such as the extent of participation with communities far beyond one's local neighborhood or town. In addition, many forms of cultural acceptance are increasing. For example, the proportion of Americans who believe that marriage between people of different races is morally acceptable is much higher than it was during the 1950s. The extent of support for equal rights for all groups is also much greater than it was two generations ago. All of these are signs of cultural enlightenment, not decline.

2) At the hearing, you mentioned how single-parent births are increasing for all groups, except perhaps those at the top of the income ladder. Could you expand on this issue and discuss what role this issue should—and should not—play in decisions before Congress?

Births to unmarried women have increased since the 1960s across Americans of all class backgrounds. The CDC does not report births to unmarried women by class, but researchers have found ways of uncovering the trend. One indicator of class is educational attainment. And one indicator of the rate is the proportion of mothers who are single and who have a child less than one year old, which tracks very closely with births to unmarried women.

In 2015, demographers Sara McLanahan and Wade Jacobsen showed that between 1960 and 2015 the proportion of mothers in this category has grown for mothers at all education levels. For those in the bottom quarter of the education distribution, the proportion has increased from just over 10% to just under 50%; for those in the middle half of the distribution, from about 5% to about 40%; for those in the top quarter, from less than 5% to more than 10%.[1]

Notably, the growth has been roughly equally steep for the bottom two groups, which represent everyone up to the 75th percentile of the education distribution. In other words, the increases have been steep for the vast majority of mothers. At the very top of the education distribution, the increase has been less steep. However, notice that it has still been an increase, and the rates have more than doubled. Simply put, giving birth while single is far more common than it used to be for mothers of virtually all class backgrounds. The idea that only the working class has seen an increase in single births is wrong.

The rate of births to unmarried mothers is something that Congress should certainly consider as it examines the expansion or contraction of the safety net. Paid family leave and early child care are probably more important today than they have ever been. At the same time, most researchers would probably be skeptical of efforts

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[2] See Mario L. Small, 2009, Unanticipated Gains, Oxford Univ. Press.

[3] Small, Chapter 2.

[4] Small, Chapter 2.

[1] Sara McLanahan and Wade Jacobsen, 2015, Pages 3–23 in "Families in an Era of Increasing Inequality," edited by Paul R. Amato, Alan Booth, Susan M. McHale, Jennifer Van Hook, National Symposium on Family Issues 5, DOI 10.1007/978–3-319–08308–7—1.

to reverse the national trends in births to unmarried mothers, even as they acknowledge that the trends are worrisome. Past efforts to reverse these trends have been costly and have not been successful. Instead, Congress should devise policies that take into account the new and diverse composition of the modern family.

3) Discussions about families often focus on a "Leave It to Beaver" nostalgia, highlighting the best of times and glossing over the hardships and struggles that left many behind. At the hearing, some witnesses discussed the decline of the "traditional family" as having a negative impact on social capital. Unfortunately, that narrow definition of a family excludes many and seems to discount the social capital associated with non-traditional, modern family structures. How should policymakers be thinking about modern families and ways to support them?

Many people remember the 1950s fondly. But many also remember the 1950s as a time of unequal protection before the law, of State-sanctioned segregation, and of high levels of intolerance, as indicated, for example, by the widespread opposition to interracial marriage and the meager support for gay rights. When thinking about the changes that the country has experienced, it is important to take all cultural changes into account, and to acknowledge that many types of community and acceptance have, in fact, improved. A wholesale return to the cultural and social attitudes of the 1950s would not benefit the country today.

Modern families probably seek the same level of social engagement that those of the past did. To cultivate that engagement seriously, the country must, first, acknowledge that most mothers today participate in the paid labor force. A set of policies that support robust paid family leave and affordable early childcare represent an essential first step. Such policies not only allow women equal participation in the labor force; they also both allow time for and encourage the social engagement essential to high collective social capital. It is not surprising that many of the industrialized countries with high levels of social capital strongly support the family.

4) You testified about how social networks can strengthen already-effective programs like Head Start. What other programs or policy areas would benefit from including a focus on building social networks?

Although my expertise lies in the role of social networks among parents in early education and childcare centers, it is clear that social networks can make a difference in other arenas. The most natural extension is the K through 12 system, where many researchers have shown that schools with effective parental networks work more effectively for both parents and children. Exploring ways of cultivating parent engagement—not merely with the school but also with one another—may help local communities do far more with the resources available.

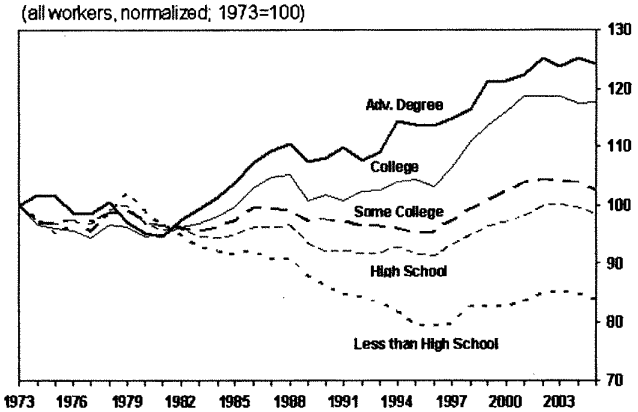
Another important context is workforce development programs. The ability to cultivate and mobilize social networks effectively has been shown repeatedly to affect success in the labor market. Many of the best workforce development programs have ongoing relationships with employers, which represents an essential step in securing placement. But both long-term employment and resilience in the face of layoffs benefit from the ability to continuously cultivate and mobilize social networks.

5) Is a decline in social capital the primary driver behind the limited economic opportunity that some communities are experiencing? What are the main barriers to economic opportunity?

The decline in social capital is not a primary driver of the limited economic opportunity that many are experiencing. The evidence is overwhelming that far more important factors are inadequate public education, under-resourced or unsafe neighborhoods, and discrimination in employment, pay, or promotion. There is strong consensus that a robust increase in high-quality early education, coupled with an improvement in comprehensive, accountable K–12 education is one of the most effective investments the Nation can make to improve economic opportunity for all.

SUBMITTED BY SENATOR COTTON

Figure 2: Real Hourly Wages by Education
(all workers, normalized; 1973=100)



Source: Economic Policy Institute

WHAT WE DO TOGETHER

THE STATE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN AMERICA

"The essense of human freedom, of civilization itself, is cooperation."

— Senator Mike Lee, "An Agenda for Our Time"

social capital project

PREPARED BY THE
VICE CHAIRMAN'S STAFF
OF THE
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
AT THE REQUEST OF
SENATOR MIKE LEE

SCP REPORT NO. 1-17

WHAT WE DO TOGETHER
THE STATE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN AMERICA

Executive Summary

Today, Americans face a wide variety of challenges in our era of tumultuous transition. We are materially better off in many ways than in the past. But despite this real progress, there is a sense that our social fabric has seen better days. Leading thinkers have issued warnings that we are increasingly "bowling alone," "coming apart," and inhabiting a "fractured republic." At the heart of those warnings is a view that what happens in the middle layers of our society is vital to sustaining a free, prosperous, democratic, and pluralistic country. That space is held together by extended networks of cooperation and social support, norms of reciprocity and mutual obligation, trust, and social cohesion. In short, it is sustained by *what we do together.*

The following report is the first product of the Social Capital Project—a multi-year research effort that will investigate the evolving nature, quality, and importance of our associational life. "Associational life" is our shorthand for the web of social relationships through which we pursue joint endeavors—namely, our families, our communities, our workplaces, and our religious congregations. These institutions are critical to forming our character and capacities, providing us with meaning and purpose, and for addressing the many challenges we face.

The goal of the project is to better understand why the health of our associational life feels so compromised, what consequences have followed from changes in the middle social layers of our society, why some communities have more robust civil society than others, and what can be done—or can stop being done—to improve the health of our social capital. Through a series of reports and hearings, it will study the state of the relationships that weave together the social fabric enabling our country—our laws, our institutions, our markets, and our democracy—to function so well in the first place.

This introductory report contains a broad overview of what we mean by "associational life," discusses its importance, and provides an initial portrait of several long-term changes in the state of American associational life across the domains of family, religion, community, and work. Here are some key findings in each of those domains:

Family: Fewer living in families, no less time spent with our families, later marriage and childbearing, fewer children, more single parenthood

- Between 1975 and 2011, the share of three- and four-year-olds cared for by a parent during the day declined from 80 percent to somewhere between 24 and 48 percent. But parents are spending no less time with their children overall.
- Between 1973 and 2016, the percentage of Americans age 18-64 who lived with a relative declined from 92 percent to 79 percent. The decline was driven by a dramatic 21-point drop in the percentage who were living with a spouse, from 71 percent to 50 percent.
- In 1970, there were 76.5 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 and older. As of 2015, that rate had declined by more than half to 32 per thousand.
- In 1970, 56 percent of American families included at least one child, but by 2016 just 42 percent did. The average family with children had 2.3 children in 1970 but just 1.9 in 2016. Among all families—with or without children—the average number of children per family has dropped from 1.3 to 0.8.
- Between 1970 and 2016, the share of children being raised by a single parent (or by neither parent) rose from 15 percent to 31 percent.
- Between 1970 and 2015, births to single mothers rose from 11 percent of all births to 40 percent.

Religion: Lower membership and attendance, fewer raised in a religious tradition, less confidence in organized religion

- In the early 1970s, nearly seven in ten adults in America were still members of a church or synagogue. While fewer Americans attended religious service regularly, 50 to 57 percent did so at least once per month. Today, just 55 percent of adults are members of a church or synagogue, while just 42 to 44 percent attend religious service at least monthly.

- In the early 1970s, 96 percent of adults had been raised in a religion, and just 5 percent reported no religious preference. Today, however, the share of adults who report having been raised in a religion is down to 91 percent, and 18 to 22 percent of adults report no religious preference.

- In 1973, two-thirds of adults had "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of confidence in "the church or organized religion," and in another survey the same year, 36 percent reported "a great deal" of confidence in organized religion. By 2016, those numbers had fallen to 41 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

Community: Less time with neighbors, no less time with friends, less racial segregation, more class segregation, less trust generally and in institutions but no less trust in friends or local government, no less volunteering, less voting, mixed trends on political engagement

- Between 1974 and 2016, the percent of adults who said they spend a social evening with a neighbor at least several times a week fell from 30 percent to 19 percent.

- Between 1970 and the early 2010s, the share of families in large metropolitan areas who lived in middle-income neighborhoods declined from 65 percent to 40 percent. Over that same time period the share of families living in poor neighborhoods rose from 19 percent to 30 percent, and those living in affluent neighborhoods rose from 17 percent to 30 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2016, the share of adults who thought most people could be trusted declined from 46 percent to 31 percent. Between 1974 and 2016, the number of Americans expressing a great deal or fair amount of trust in the judgement of the American people "under our democratic system about the issues facing our country" fell from 83 percent to 56 percent.

- Between 1974 and 2015, the share of adults that did any volunteering who reported volunteering for at least 100 hours increased from 28 percent to 34 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2012, the share of the voting-age population that was registered to vote fell from 72 percent to 65 percent, and the trend was similar for the nonpresidential election years of 1974 and 2014. Correspondingly, between 1972 and 2012, voting rates fell from 63 percent to 57 percent (and fell from 1974 to 2014).

- Between 1972 and 2008, the share of people saying they follow "what's going on in government and public affairs" declined from 36 percent to 26 percent.

- Between 1972 and 2012, the share of Americans who tried to persuade someone else to vote a particular way increased from 32 percent to 40 percent.

Work: Less time with coworkers off the job, little change in commuting time, more work among women, less work among men, more "alternative work arrangements," part-time or part-year work no more common, longer job tenure, less union membership, more occupational licensing

- Between the mid-1970s and 2012, the average amount of time Americans between the ages of 25 and 54 spent with their coworkers outside the workplace fell from about two-and-a-half hours to just under one hour.

- The share of workers living and working in different counties was 26 percent in 1970 and 27 percent in the second half of the 2000s, and commuting time has risen only modestly since 1980.

- Between the mid-1970s and 2012, among 25- to 54-year-olds, time at work rose 4 percent. The story was very different for men and women though. Hours at work rose 27 percent among women. Among men, hours at work fell by 9 percent between the mid-1970s and 2012.

- Work has become rarer, in particular, among men with less education. From the mid-1970s to 2012, hours at work fell by just 2 percent among men with a college degree or an advanced degree, compared with 14 percent among those with no more than a high school education.

- Between 1995 and 2015, workers in "alternative work arrangements" (e.g., temp jobs, independent contracting, etc.) grew from 9 percent to 16 percent of the workforce.

- Since 2004, median job tenure has been higher than its 1973 level, indicating that workers are staying in their jobs *longer* than in the past.

- Between 1970 and 2015, union membership declined from about 27 percent to 11 percent of all wage and salary workers.

We conclude that rising affluence has made associational life less necessary for purposes of gaining material benefits, but that we have lost much by doing less together.

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WHAT WE DO TOGETHER
THE STATE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN AMERICA

> *In modern political thought, two terms have until recently tended to dominate discourse: the* individual *and the* nation-state. *This can hardly be surprising, since both these terms (and their underlying realities) are modern arrivals on the stage of history. But these two terms apply, as it were, only to the two extremes of social life, excluding the "thickest" parts of social living in between.*[1]
>
> – Michael Novak

> *The quest for community will not be denied, for it springs from some of the powerful needs of human nature—needs for a clear sense of cultural purpose, membership, status, and continuity. Without these, no amount of mere material welfare will serve to arrest the developing sense of alienation in our society, and the mounting preoccupation with the imperatives of community.*[2]
>
> – Robert Nisbet

Introduction

Americans are living through a period of transition to a post-industrial society based on knowledge and services, one that has wrought immense social changes.[3] Past changes of similar scale—first from the long pre-agricultural past to rural farming life, followed by our tumultuous transition to an industrial economy—have been accompanied by social dislocation and subsequent adaptation.[4] But today we are struggling to constructively orient our politics in a forward-looking way; instead, much of our politics and discourse is oriented around nostalgia for a time that is never returning.[5]

To be sure, much is going well in America. Relative to many other countries, we hold an enviable position. Having emerged from the Great Recession, the nation enjoys relatively low unemployment and incomes that, while growing too slowly, are as high as

they have ever been across the board.[6] Educational attainment continues to increase; a higher share of Americans than ever before have a college degree.[7] Most workers enjoy longer retirements, and overall life expectancy is at an all-time high.[8] The internet and advances in mobile communications technology have made possible unprecedented and inexpensive access to the world's knowledge. By these standards, it has never been a better time to be alive in America.

And yet, despite this real progress, there is a disorienting sense that our social fabric is frayed. We are wealthier in material terms than ever before, but leading thinkers have issued warnings that we are increasingly "bowling alone,"[9] "coming apart,"[10] and inhabiting a "fractured republic."[11] At the heart of those warnings, to one degree or another, is the view that what happens in the middle layers of our society—what we do together in the space between the individual and the state—is vital to sustaining a free, prosperous, democratic, and pluralistic country. It is in that space where we are formed, where we learn to solve problems together, where we learn the "art of association"—a space held together by extended networks of cooperation and social support, norms of reciprocity and mutual obligation, trust, and social cohesion. As Yuval Levin puts it, the middle layers

> *begin in loving family attachments. They spread outward to interpersonal relationships in neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, religious communities, fraternal bodies, civic associations, economic enterprises, activist groups, and the work of local governments. They reach further outward toward broader social, political, and professional affiliations, state institutions, and regional affinities. And they conclude in a national identity that among its foremost attributes is dedicated to the principle of the equality of the entire human race.*[12]

While much is going well in America on a comparative and historical basis, our associational life today appears unhealthy in many ways. For example, between 1960 and 2015, the proportion of children under 18 living with only one or neither parent increased dramatically, from 12 percent to 31 percent.[13] In 2015, over a third of parents—and half of fathers—said they spent too little time with their children.[14] Work

relationships, civic engagement, and religious communities have also been important elements of building and maintaining our social fabric. Yet, a steadily increasing share of prime-age males (ages 25 to 54) have dropped out of the labor force altogether.[15] There have been uneven but decades-long declines in civic and community participation, especially of the face-to-face variety.[16] Many measures of religious vitality have also slowly but steadily declined over the last several decades.[17]

We also appear to be losing faith in national institutions. The government, the press, and both organized labor and corporate leaders lack the confidence of the people, as reflected in several long-running surveys. For example, between 1958 and 2015, the Pew Research Center shows that public trust in the federal government fell from about 73 percent to about 19 percent.[18] Gallup reports that Americans have very low confidence in many major institutions; less than 40 percent of respondents said they had a combined "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the medical system (39 percent), the presidency (36 percent), the U.S. Supreme Court (36 percent), the public schools (30 percent), banks (27 percent), organized labor (23 percent), the criminal justice system (23 percent), television news (21 percent), newspapers (20 percent), big business (18 percent), and Congress (6 percent). In most cases, current levels of confidence reflect a marked decline over the last several decades. These institutions that have so much influence over our lives appear sclerotic, unresponsive to modern needs, and opaque and inaccessible to many.

There are innumerable factors that have contributed to the challenges Americans face in this new era and to the anxiety stemming from the resistance of those challenges, thus far, to ready solutions. All are important, including the discrete economic issues Washington policymakers and pundits are most familiar with and therefore most comfortable discussing—taxes and spending, welfare, trade, employment, wages, and growth.

The Social Capital Project is a multi-year research project to investigate an equally important factor that is too often overlooked—the evolving nature, quality, and importance of our associational life. In other words, *what we do together.*

Through a series of reports and hearings, it will study the state of the relationships that weave together the social fabric enabling our country—our laws, our institutions, our markets, and our democracy—to function so well in the first place.

Why does the health of America's associational life feel so compromised? Where *is* it compromised? What consequences have followed from declining social capital? Why do some communities have more robust civil society than others? What can be done—or can stop being done—to grow Americans' stock of social capital? What will enable us to live better together?

The pages that follow first seek to define "associational life," "social capital," and related concepts, providing a brief intellectual history of these ideas. A broad overview of trends in the state of associational life follows. Our analyses will be organized by considering four domains of associational life—family, religion, community, and work—and we focus specifically on painting a picture of changes in what we do together. Finally, we preview some of the issues and topics we will be studying in the years ahead.

What Is "Associational Life"?

Many people in many eras have defined and described the importance of social relationships for sustaining a free, democratic, and prosperous society—using a variety of terms such as "civil society," "mediating institutions," "intermediate associations," and the more recently popular "social capital."[19]

There is little consensus about what exactly these terms include. For instance, some writers have included market relationships in their definition of associational life, while others have explicitly excluded them. Many have disagreed about the inclusion of family or politics under the umbrella of civil society. Some even distinguish between face-to-

face interaction and those relationships not mediated by face-to-face contact (e.g., large, impersonal national membership organizations). Despite these important differences, the Social Capital Project will take a big-tent approach to these issues. We use "associational life" as shorthand for the web of social relationships through which we pursue joint endeavors—namely, our families, our communities, our workplaces, and our religious congregations.

Doing justice to the breadth of scholarship on civil society is beyond the scope of this paper, but we review briefly the contributions of a few key thinkers in order to provide historical context and to establish its contemporary relevance.

The foremost chronicler of what Americans do together was Alexis de Tocqueville, whose nine-month trip to the United States in the early nineteenth century resulted in his two-volume treatise *Democracy in America*.[20] Tocqueville was particularly interested in the ways in which Americans spontaneously organized themselves in the service of self-governance, thereby establishing widespread norms and habits of association. He observed that what gave the United States its unique character and strength was our proclivity to form associations of all kinds, and in so doing to see our interests in the shared interests of others. As Don Eberly puts it,

> *Tocqueville was amazed at the almost limitless sweep of this activity. Civil society captured nearly all forms of human endeavors—intellectual, moral, social, religious, and as some insist, economic. Civic functions overlapped sometimes with political, and even those purely civic activities served to cultivate democratic habits and skills. In the truest sense, they were laboratories of democracy. Local civic associations put democracy within people's reach, inculcating the customs and many uses of democratic process, tempering self-interest and isolation.*[21]

In the middle of the twentieth century, sociologist and intellectual historian Robert Nisbet wrote powerfully about the role of "intermediate associations" in a free society. By intermediate associations, Nisbet simply meant the social relationships and groups that play some functional role in our lives. In his 1953 book, *The Quest for Community*, he

notes that the human need for associational life "will not be denied, for it springs from some of the powerful needs of human nature—needs for a clear sense of cultural purpose, membership, status, and continuity." [22] Nisbet was particularly worried that if people did not find belonging and purpose in human-scale intermediate associations of family, religion, and other forms of communal life, they would find it elsewhere—a grave prospect in the context of World War II, communism, and fascism.

In the late 1970s, the idea of the middle social layers was given attention by a group of writers and thinkers at the American Enterprise Institute.[23] The "mediating structures project,"[24] as it came to be known, sought to think through how we might use local social organizations to provide social services such as welfare, education, housing, and so on. The participants in that project, spanning much of the ideological spectrum, vehemently disagreed about the relationship between the state and mediating institutions, but the project helped carry the idea to a new generation.[25]

Others have added to this long tradition by attempting to conceptualize and measure the causes, consequences, and importance of what we do together under the broad umbrella of "social capital." The earliest known use of the term comes from 1916, when L. J. Hanifan first used it to describe "tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse."[26] Urbanist Jane Jacobs described social capital as neighborhood networks of mutual assistance and self-governance.[27] Sociologist James S. Coleman defined social capital as something realized in social networks that facilitated productive cooperation.[28] In short, these early definitions described social capital as a resource for solving collective action problems.

More recently, Robert Putnam revived the notion of social capital in his 1993 book *Making Democracy Work.*[29] In an article summarizing that book, he defined social capital as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."[30] He later elaborated on the idea of social capital in his bestselling book *Bowling Alone*, in which he defined social

capital in similar terms as "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."[31] Widely lauded at the time, *Bowling Alone* took a broad view of the health of American life, showing general (though not unqualified) declines in various measures of associational life including political participation, community and civic involvement, religious participation, informal social connections, volunteering, and trust.

In his book *Trust*, Francis Fukuyama argued for the importance to societies of non-familial sources of trust and cooperation, borrowing from James Coleman's definition of social capital as "the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations."[32] In a related 1995 book, *The Great Disruption*, he makes the case that the transition from an industrial economy to one based on knowledge weakened our social capital, which he defined as "a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits cooperation among them."[33] Nevertheless, he argued, "social order, once disrupted, tends to get remade again," because "human beings are by nature social creatures, whose most basic drives and instincts lead them to create moral rules that bind themselves together into communities."[34]

Since the mid-1990s, research about social capital has dramatically increased.[35] It has become a topic of interest to researchers around the world, precipitating extensive projects at the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).[36] Nobel Laureate economist Elinor Ostrom has advocated the concept as "an essential complement to the concepts of natural, physical, and human capital."[37] Many researchers have applied a variety of methods to understand aspects of social capital and the importance of related concepts to such topics as political life, social cohesion, volunteerism, work, civic participation, health, and happiness.[38]

However, progress in the research has been slow due to a number of significant challenges. There are bright spots in the literature, but it generally suffers from challenges in definition, conceptualization, and measurement. As a recent National Academy of Sciences report notes,

> *Because the terms "social capital," "civic engagement," and "social cohesion" refer to broad and malleably-defined concepts that take on different meanings depending on the context, they are not amenable to direct statistical measurement. However, dimensions of these broad constructs—the behaviors, attitudes, social ties, and experiences—can be more narrowly and tangibly defined and are thus more feasibly measured.*[39, 40]

"Social capital" has emerged as the most widely used and familiar shorthand for the concepts discussed here, but it remains a slippery term. It is not always clear, for instance, whether the dimensions associated with it constitute the thing "social capital," are products that flow from social capital, or are lubricants that facilitate the development of social capital. We will not attempt to resolve these ambiguities. Instead, the project will use more or less precise terms as needed while, above all, emphasizing the importance of formal and informal social networks and associations that inhabit the space between the individual and large public and private institutions.

Why Is Associational Life Important?

In the intellectual tradition of studying associational life and its cousins, there emerge three key reasons why it is important.

First, the middle social layers are implicated in nearly every aspect of our lives, and therefore are critically important formative structures in which human development occurs. What we do together affects our character, capacities, deepest held moral commitments, and any number of other aspects of who we are.

Second, mediating institutions provide an important role in giving meaning and purpose to individual lives. "Meaning" and "purpose" are words that give hives to empirically minded social scientists, but nonetheless deserve our attention. Jointly pursuing common goals—prosaic or profound—draws people out of themselves, gives them a reason to get up in the morning, and to be responsive to the needs of others. When people lack the meaning and purpose derived from strong bonds and routine social

attachments, they are more prone to alienation and atomization.[41] Along these lines, David Brooks has argued, "The great challenge of our moment is the crisis of isolation and fragmentation, the need to rebind the fabric of a society that has been torn by selfishness, cynicism, distrust, and autonomy."[42]

The third reason our middle social layers are so important, especially today, is that they provide a useful means for discovering solutions to problems. The large institutions of our modern society, polity, and economy are often ill-equipped to address needs that are unique to the particular "circumstances of time and place."[43] They are sometimes too far removed from local sources of knowledge and networks of trust, and they can be slow to adapt as problems evolve. Some can be out of touch with the values of specific places, breeding resentment and fueling regional polarization. As many analysts have concluded, decentralizing authority and decision-making capacity to our middle layers might go a long way to increasing America's ability to address challenges incrementally through trial and error in ways that are much closer to the people and their varied situations.[44]

An emphasis on the middle layers of our social life is no panacea for the many challenges and opportunities we face. But in an era where many of our conversations seem to revolve around the individual and large institutions, an emphasis on the space between them could bring many benefits. The rest of this report examines trends in various aspects of associational life. It will intermittently return to the basic question of why associational life matters.

How Has Associational Life Changed?

It is impossible for a report of this length to adequately survey the evidence on all the consequential ways that associational life has changed over the years. Instead, we have chosen to focus on available indicators fulfilling two requirements. First, we are interested in describing relatively long-term changes over some constant period of time. After reviewing the available evidence, we chose to focus on trends between the early 1970s and the 2010s—roughly the past 45 years. Second, we have chosen to focus as

much as possible on indicators that illustrate what we do together, rather than look at any number of social or economic problems that might be presumed to reflect the state of associational life.

To organize the discussion, we assess changes in four domains of associational life, drawing on the work of previous scholars. Specifically, we take in turn changes in families, religious congregations, secular communities, and workplaces.

Families Together

We come into the world met with the joyous smiles of family, and we leave it with family mourning the loss. In between, if we are fortunate, we forge our strongest social connections with children, spouses, parents, siblings, and other relatives—with family. All subsequent social capital investment begins with the bonds between parents and children. These bonds provide purpose to parents' lives, happiness, and a connection to previous and future generations. Through parents, children receive physical sustenance and emotional support, acquire language and other skills and dispositions, and form values, beliefs, and aspirations. The development of secure connections with parents facilitates the formation of secure attachments to other people—including future partners and children, in whom parents' stock of social capital is reinvested. Social capital obtained and created within the family is practically a necessity for all other forms of associational life.

So much of what we do together occurs in families into which we are born or that we choose to create in adulthood. The institution of marriage has weakened significantly in recent decades, but vast majorities of young Americans still hope to get married someday.[45] We also derive benefits from a range of other family relationships—not just with our children, spouses, and parents, but our brothers, sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws, cousins, aunts, and uncles. In many communities, these relationships assume special importance, as with the strong role grandparents often play in black communities or the deep extended family connections in Latino families. The happiness our family relationships impart is the most vivid illustration of the importance of healthy associational life.

Married couples, for example, report higher life satisfaction than single adults.[46] While people predisposed to be happy are presumably likelier to get married in the first place, evidence suggests that marriage has a positive causal effect on life satisfaction. Around the world, the well-known midlife dip in life satisfaction is moderated by being married.[47]

Indeed, vast bodies of research find that married couples and their children tend to have better outcomes than single people and the children of single parents. Unfortunately, methodological problems render most—though not all—of these studies unpersuasive.[48] However, if we stipulate uncontroversially that *happy* marriages provide at least some of the beneficial outcomes to adults and children that the research claims is produced by "marriage," we can avoid, for now, divisive debates over what public policy should or should not do to promote marriage. And the research is clear that on average, marriage is associated with innumerable positive outcomes.[49]

Research on extended family's effects suffer from similar analytical challenges but also accord with the intuition that healthy family relationships impart benefits.[50] It requires little insight to note that adult children provide help to their aging parents, and parents provide support to their adult children in the form of financial help, advice, and child care.

Trends in Family Associational Life

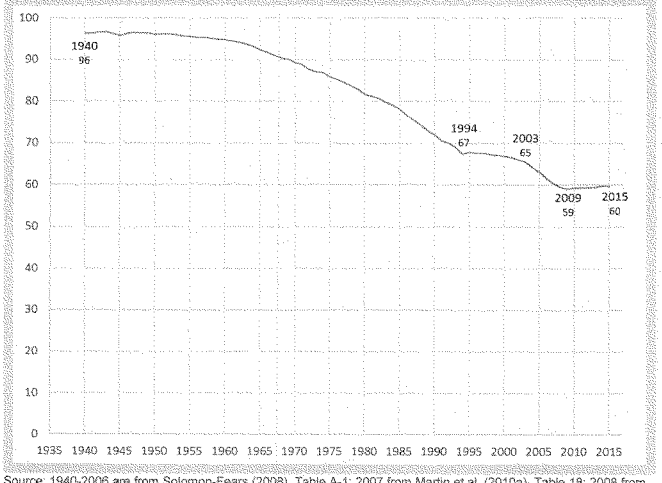
Closeness of Family Connections

Americans do not appear less likely to live near their parents in adulthood than in the past. A useful indicator is the share of adults living in their birth state. Research has shown that living in one's childhood state in adulthood is strongly correlated with living near a parent.[51] Between 1970 and 2015, the percentage of native-born Americans age 25 to 54 who lived in their birth state (and who thus tended to live near their parents) stayed about the same, rising from 63 percent to 64 percent.[52] The share of prime-age adults with children living near the children's grandparents was flat at 64 percent.

According to the General Social Survey, 38 percent of adults in 1974 said they spent a social evening with relatives several times a week or more, while 39 percent did in 2016.[53] It is clearly the case that children are less likely to be cared for during the workweek by a parent. For example, between 1975 and 2011, the share of three- and four-year-olds cared for by a parent during the day declined from 80 percent to

somewhere between 24 and 48 percent.[54] This profound change reflects the increase in work among mothers in recent decades.

Percent of Births Occurring to Married Women, 1940-2015



Source: 1940-2006 are from Solomon-Fears (2008), Table A-1; 2007 from Martin et al. (2010a), Table 18; 2008 from Martin et al. (2010b), Table 15; 2009 from Martin et al. (2011), Table 15; 2010-2013 from Solomon-Fears (2014), Table 1; 2014 from Hamilton et al. (2015), Table 15; 2015 from Martin et al. (2017), Table 15.

However, evidence from time-use surveys suggests that both mothers and fathers are nonetheless spending more time with their children than in the past.[55] Even though more mothers are working, school-age children are not around during the day anyway during the school year. Parents appear to have otherwise compensated for any additional time they spend at the workplace versus the past.[56]

Evidence does indicate, however, that parents and children are less likely today to participate with each other in activities at home than they were in the past.[57] Claude Fischer speculates that this circle can be squared if parents are spending more time

with children outside the home, such as at restaurants and stores, play dates, and extracurricular activities.[58]

Family Formation and Dissolution

Another indication of diminished family connections is that the number of adults living in families has declined over the past 45 years. Between 1973 and 2016, the percentage of Americans age 18-64 who lived with a relative declined from 92 percent to 79 percent.[59] The decline was driven by a dramatic 21-point drop in the percentage who were living with a spouse, from 71 percent to 50 percent. Adults who would have been married in the early 1970s were instead cohabiting (possibly as a parent, up from less than one percent to 9 percent); living alone (up from 6 to 11 percent); living with other relatives (possibly just their own child, up from 8 to 12 percent); living with roommates (up from under 2 to 4 percent); or living in a parent's household (slightly up from 13 to 14 percent). Between 1973 and 2016, among 25- to 34-year-olds, the share who were living with a spouse dropped from 78 percent to 41 percent, and the drop among women 18-24 was from 44 percent to 9 percent.[60]

Marriage rates have plummeted over the past several decades. In 1970, there were 76.5 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 and older. As of 2015, that rate had declined by more than half to 32 per thousand.[61] Americans are getting married later, and more of us are not marrying at all. In 1970, the median age at first marriage was 21 among women and 23 among men. By 2016, those medians were 27.5 and 29.5—both higher by six and a half years.[62] Between 1970 and 2015, the share of Americans aged 50 to 54 who had never married rose from 6 percent to 14.5 percent.[63]

These trends have numerous causes, including rising educational and employment opportunities for women, increasing affluence, and the sexual revolution. Marriage is simply not viewed as being as necessary as it once was. Increasingly, long-term romantic relationships involve couples who are unmarried but living together. Among women aged 19 to 44 who married between 1965 and 1974, just 11 percent had

cohabited with their husband prior to marriage. That was true of 66 percent of women 19-44 who married between 2005 and 2009.[64]

An important reason for rising cohabitation is the increasing fragility of marriage, which has led more couples to "try out" relationships with each other before committing to an institution that has seen rising failure rates over time. The divorce rate was 15 per 1,000 married women in 1970. It rose throughout the 1970s, as no-fault divorce spread throughout the country, then fell thereafter to about 18 per 1,000 in 2010, still higher than in 1970.

However, this decline was in part a product of baby boomers aging out of high-divorce life stages into low-divorce ones. If the distribution of married women across ages had been the same in 1970 as it was in 2010, the divorce rate would have risen steadily, from about 10 per 1,000 in 1970 to 18 per 1,000 in 2010.[65]

These trends can also be interpreted in terms of Americans perceiving marriage as less necessary. The spread of no-fault divorce reflected demand for easier exits from marriage; between 1973 and 2016, the share of adults saying divorce should be easier to obtain rose from 32 percent to 38 percent.[66] We might expect that as rising divorce removed unhappy couples from the stock of married families, the remaining husbands and wives would be more satisfied with their marriages. However, between 1973 and 2016, the share of them reporting being in a "very happy" marriage actually fell from 67 percent to 60 percent.[67]

In contrast to the non-elderly population, living arrangements were much more stable among Americans aged 65 and older. In 1973, 71 percent lived with a relative, and 70 percent did in 2016.[68] Elderly women became more likely to live with a spouse and less likely to live with another relative, while elderly men became more likely to live alone and less likely to live with a spouse or other relative. These changes reflect longer lifespans. Since women tend to marry older men, greater longevity results in more marriage for women (who do not become widowed as early as in the past), more living

alone for men (who are more likely to outlive their younger wives than in the past), and less reliance on other family members.

Fertility

Along with delayed and declining marriage has come delayed and declining childbearing. Between 1970 and 2015, the average age at which women first give birth increased from about 21 years to about 26 years.[69] In 1970, 56 percent of American families included at least one child, but by 2016 just 42 percent did.[70] The average family with children had 2.3 children in 1970 but just 1.9 in 2016. Among all families—with or without children—the average number of children per family has dropped from 1.3 to 0.8.[71]

The decline in fertility appears to reflect a diminished interest in having children. Between 1972 and 2016, the share of adults with four or more children fell from 25 percent to 15 percent. The share who said the ideal number of children was four or more fell from 28 percent to 15 percent.[72]

Family Instability

The subject of family breakdown—the declining share of children living with two biological parents—has generated controversy for much of the past 50 years. The crux of the debate turns on a number of questions. Do the typically better outcomes of children with two parents reflect the importance of having two parents or simply the more advantageous attributes and circumstances of those with intact marriages? Would the children of single parents do better if their actual parents—not hypothetical ones—stayed together? What are the chances that the trend in single parenthood can be reversed? Are the benefits of promoting two-parent families worth the cost in the form of possible stigmatization of single parents and their children?

These are questions the Social Capital Project will be exploring in future papers. For present purposes, we assert only a proposition that we take to be uncontroversial: healthy family relationships are valuable and constitute the most fundamental sphere of

associational life. The fact that so many children today grow up in disrupted families is a cause for great concern to the extent that we can imagine a world in which many more children are raised by two happily married biological parents. Progressives and conservatives may disagree about what it would take to produce more healthy marriages—more economic opportunity? public campaigns to promote marriage?—but the goal of doing so need not be ideological or controversial.

Between 1970 and 2016, the share of children being raised by a single parent (or by neither parent) rose from 15 percent to 31 percent.[73] Over half of the children of high school graduates with no postsecondary education live with a single parent, and three in five children of parents without a high school diploma.[74] In part because of this educational disadvantage, more than three in five African American children live with a single parent, though single parenthood has increased sharply among non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics as well.[75] These estimates assess living arrangements at a point in time, but a majority of American children can expect to live with a single parent at some point before reaching the age of sixteen.[76]

Single parenthood has risen both because of an increase in divorce and due to a rise in unwed childbearing. Between 1970 and 2015, births to single mothers as a share of all births rose from 11 percent to 40 percent.[77]

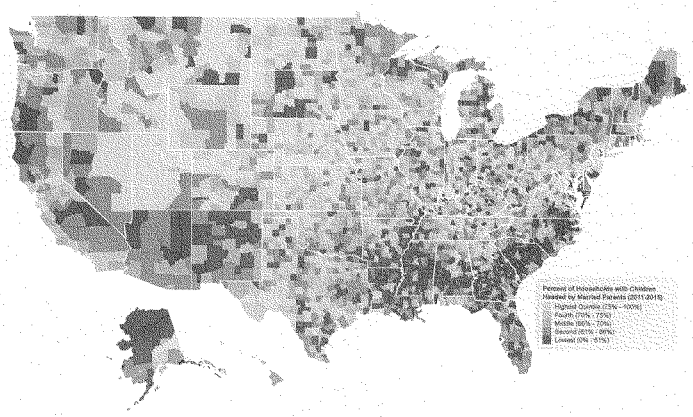
Much of the increase in unwed childbearing is due to rising cohabitation. Fifty-eight percent of unmarried mothers are cohabiting at the time of their child's birth.[78] However, cohabiting relationships tend to be much less stable than marriages. Half of children born to cohabiting parents will see their mother's relationship to one or more men break up by their third birthday, compared to just 13 percent of children in married-parent families.[79]

From a number of perspectives, then, families seem to associate together no less than in the past. They spend comparable time with their families, despite the increase in work

among mothers, and appear to live as close to family members as before. But Americans spend less time in families today, reflecting the decline in marriage. They also have fewer children, which seems to reflect falling demand for them. Instead, Americans are marrying and having children later than in the past and cohabiting more. These trends reflect increasing individualism and pursuit of non-familial ends. While we may be no worse off individually for marrying and having children later, these trends may have reduced social cooperation to the extent that family life promotes community engagement.

More to the point, the decline in marriage partly reflects the weakness of the institution, as marriages have been increasingly likely to dissolve over time and the remaining marriages appear to be less happy than in the past. And these trends have almost certainly not been benign for children. Many single parents do as good a job or better as many married parents at investing in their children. But it is hard not to conclude that if we had managed to shore up marriage these past decades, children today—to say nothing of parents—would be much better connected to valuable family ties. Increasing family disconnection is of particular concern considering the role that family plays as the foundation for all other relationships.

Percent of Households with Children Headed by Married Parents by County, 2011-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
See interactive map online here: https://lee.senate.gov/scp/married.html

Worshiping Together

The state of religion in America is a topic that may be approached from many different perspectives. The Social Capital Project's interest in religion is a specific one: historically, religious institutions have been of primary importance in creating and maintaining extra-familial social ties and dense community networks. That is to say, religious institutions may be considered purely as highly effective incubators of social capital without regard to specific religious doctrines. From Tocqueville to Nisbet to Putnam, many observers of society have remarked on the importance of religion in drawing people out of their private lives and into associational life.

As Putnam put it in *Bowling Alone*,

> *Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America....As a rough rule of thumb, our evidence shows, nearly half of all associational memberships in America are church related, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context.*[80]

Religious institutions that convene people under the banner of shared beliefs have powerful community-promoting advantages as compared with secular institutions. They provide a vehicle for like-minded people to associate, through regular attendance at religious services and other events and charitable activities they sponsor. Religious institutions are highly effective at enforcing commitment to shared principles and norms of behavior, passed down over generations.

These commitments are often themselves pro-social and other-regarding. Churches and other places of worship encourage coreligionists to bond in the context of denominational activities. But they also facilitate associational life among adherents outside religious activities and thereby produce wide-ranging benefits. People who live in communities where their coreligionists are more numerous have higher household incomes, greater educational attainment, higher marriage rates and lower divorce rates,

and there is reason to believe these associations reflect the effects of living with coreligionists rather than being incidental.[81]

Further, religious institutions encourage investment in social ties outside the denomination. Putnam reports that people committed to religion

> *are much more likely than other people to visit friends, to entertain at home, to attend club meetings, and to belong to sports groups; professional and academic societies; school service groups; youth groups; service clubs; hobby or garden clubs; literary, art, discussion, and study groups; school fraternities and sororities; farm organizations; political clubs; nationality groups; and other miscellaneous groups.*[82]

Religious membership is also strongly correlated with "voting, jury service, community projects, talking with neighbors, and giving to charity."[83] Putnam and David Campbell surveyed Americans and found that 91 percent of those volunteering for a religious group also volunteered for a secular group.[84] Further, only one-third of adults who did not volunteer for a religious group volunteered for a secular one. "Regular churchgoers," say Putnam and Campbell, "are more likely to give to secular causes than nonchurchgoers," and the religious give more of their money to such causes when they donate.[85]

Based on surveys in 2004 and 2006, frequent churchgoers were more likely than other Americans to engage in nine specific pro-social and altruistic behaviors, and they were no less likely to engage in five other ones. Putnam and Campbell found these relationships still held after taking into account a variety of demographic and economic variables. Religious Americans are also more trusting of people than other Americans are, and they are generally trusted more as well.[86]

Most importantly for the purposes of this project, it appears that religious membership is associated with participation in community life specifically because of the social capital it creates between religious adherents. Holding constant a person's general connectedness, the connectedness that comes through interacting with other

congregants strongly predicts a range of indicators related to social capital. As Putnam and Campbell put it, "It is religious belonging that matters for neighborliness, not religious believing."[87]

It is certainly possible that a healthy associational life and rich networks of interdependency can develop and sustain themselves organically, powered by the utilitarian ends they fulfill. But it may be that community requires the support of mediating institutions in order to thrive. Social capital, like physical capital, requires investment and reinvestment. That need for replenishment is costly, requiring time, cooperation, compromise, patience, and social discomfort. Mediating institutions may be uniquely able to enforce commitment among members of a community to sustain associational life, thereby promoting opportunity and happiness. Few domains in the secular world—the Armed Forces serving as an exception—are able to generate such commitment.

Consider a recent profile of Utah by columnist Megan McArdle, exploring the reasons for its high rates of economic mobility.[88] McArdle's depiction of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints highlights the remarkable degree to which it has institutionalized mutual responsibility, cooperation, and service:

> *The volunteering starts in the church wards, where bishops keep a close eye on what's going on in the congregation, and tap members as needed to help each other. If you're out of work, they may reach out to small business people to find out who's hiring. If your marriage is in trouble, they'll find a couple who went through a hard time themselves to offer advice.*
>
> *But it does not stop with informal networks. Mormon youth are encouraged to go on missions. Many of them evangelize, of course, but others end up doing work for the church....Every Mormon is expected to skip two meals a month, and to donate at least the value of the food they would have bought (and preferably more) to help the needy. They're also encouraged to volunteer for the church.*

It is difficult to imagine how such social capital can be maintained in the absence of the kind of commitment that organized religion marshals (or that military institutions demand of those who choose to serve). A central concern of the Social Capital Project will be how to promote commitment to healthy associational life—within families, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, polities, and the nation as a whole.

Trends in Religious Associational Life

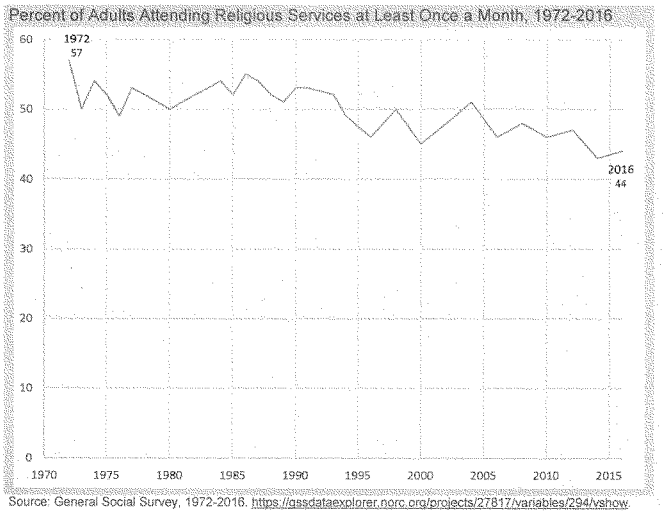
What has happened to associational life in the domain of religion? The story is discouraging, which raises deeper concerns about the health of our associational life more broadly. By the early 1970s, Americans were already worshiping together less than they had in the 1950s and early 1960s. As Yuval Levin notes, "the 'me' decade" ushered in an era characterized "by an ethic of individualism and atomism" in religious life and beyond.[89]

The result was, in the words of Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, a

> *tendency toward highly individualized religious psychology without the benefits of strong supportive attachments to believing communities....In this climate of expressive individualism, religion tends to become "privatized," or more anchored in the personal realms.*[90]

That said, in the early 1970s, nearly seven in ten adults in America were still members of a church or synagogue.[91] While fewer Americans attended religious service regularly, 50 to 57 percent did so at least once per month.[92] Today, just 55 percent of adults are members of a church or synagogue, while just 42 to 44 percent attend religious service at least monthly.[93]

Percent of Adults Attending Religious Services at Least Once a Month, 1972-2016



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2016. https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/294/vshow.

The evidence on religious adherence—including church membership but also other forms of engagement with a denomination—is less reliable, but our analyses indicate a similar decline.[94] Even among religious adherents, the influence of the largest mainline churches has eroded sharply over time, giving way to a "more decentralized, personalized, evangelical Christianity."[95] The new Christian denominations are more individualist and comprise a more diffuse structure, features that are less amenable to social capital investment.

The declines in church attendance and religious affiliation appear to have occurred primarily among Americans who were only loosely attached to congregations to begin with.[96] A disproportionate share of these marginal adherents were poor or working class.[97]

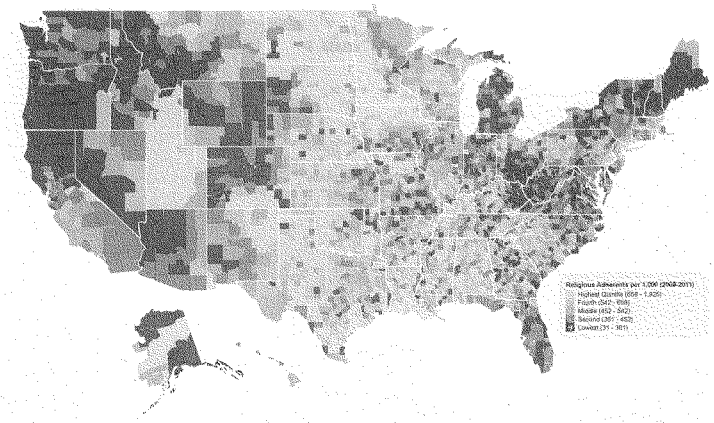
The decline in religious association was partly due to a decline in religiosity, though it must be the case that each affected the other. In the early 1970s, 98 percent of adults had been raised in a religion, and just 5 percent reported no religious preference. Today, however, the share of adults who report having been raised in a religion is down to 91 percent, and 18 to 22 percent of adults report no religious preference.[98]

Declining trust in religious institutions also likely has played an important role in weakening religious associational life. In 1973, two-thirds of adults had "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of confidence in "the church or organized religion," and in another survey the same year, 36 percent reported "a great deal" of confidence in organized religion. By 2016, those numbers had fallen to 41 percent and 20 percent, respectively.[99]

More generally, the decline in religious participation may signal that mediating institutions are simply losing the battle against aspects of individualism that make commitment to community norms and standards burdensome. Personal freedom in matters of sexuality and gender identity, for example, has become a more important value since the mid-twentieth century. Though not their primary purpose, religious organizations— like mediating institutions generally—bind us together for human betterment. But norms and practices that define intentional communities can become viewed as unproductive and illegitimate over time. The one broadly anti-social trait that Putnam and Campbell found to be more common among religious adherents than among other Americans was stronger intolerance of the groups and practices that each are inclined to disfavor. (It should be noted, though, that tolerance has been rising among religious adherents.)[100]

Any revival of associational life will have to grapple with the tension between the good that comes from *binding* people through mediating institutions and the alienation that can arise from *bounding* community in rigid ways. But if membership in a religious community improves outcomes for congregants, and if those lower down the socioeconomic ladder are especially at risk of becoming religiously disconnected, we might worry about the erosion of congregational religious life.

Religious Adherents per Thousand People, by County, 2009-2011



Source: U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2010 (County File); The Association of Religion Data Archives. Note: Some counties have adherence rates above 1,000, indicating more adherents in the county than residents. In those cases, it is likely that people in neighboring counties commute in See interactive map online here: https://lee.senate.gov/scp/adherents.html

Living Together in Communities

"Americans of all ages, all conditions, all minds," Tocqueville wrote,

> *constantly unite. Not only do they have commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but they also have a thousand other kinds: religious, moral, grave, futile, very general and very particular, immense and very small....*[101]

What we do together outside our families, workplaces, and houses of worship encompasses a wide variety of important social activity—everyday informal interaction with friends and neighbors, involvement with schools, participation in civic associations, and other voluntary cooperative pursuits. The relationships we forge within these activities are vital sources of companionship, social support, mutual aid, information, and self-governance. The communities to which we belong develop the civic skills and social norms that reinforce reciprocity, trust, and cooperation.

In turn, these elements of social capital strengthen community. For example, high levels of civic engagement are associated with better public governance.[102] An atomized society with limited capacity for cooperation is no society at all. It will face economic stagnation or decline relative to others in which members work together.

At the same time, communities are defined by who they include, or conversely, who they exclude. The dark side of community is that it sometimes comes with costs for those left out.[103] Moreover, even in-group members are likely worse off to the extent that distinct communities do not overlap or interact. Community builds internal social ties—"bonding social capital"—but it can impede investment in "bridging social capital" that connects groups to each other.[104]

Neighborhoods, which provide a natural setting for community networks to thrive, clearly illustrate this tension. Neighborhoods with a healthy associational life provide untold benefits to their residents. Research has shown that communities with higher levels of trust and where people are more inclined to confront community problems also

experience lower crime.[105] Communities where people help and look out for each other are also more likely to pool common resources when necessary, for example, in the aftermath of a natural disaster.[106] In addition, neighborhoods with a healthy associational life appear to provide children with more opportunities. Economists Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren found that counties with high social capital tend to have high rates of upward mobility, and most of this correlation reflects a causal impact.[107]

These benefits aside, however, because of residential segregation by income, race, and other attributes, neighborhood advantages enjoyed by families in the communities richest in social capital are often mirrored in disadvantages faced by residents of other neighborhoods. When those families with fewer financial and personal assets are left behind, the result can be a deficit of social capital—of "monitoring, socializing, mentoring, and organizing"—that leaves the vulnerable even more disadvantaged.[108] Indeed, Chetty and Hendren find that high levels of segregation impede upward mobility.

Similarly, schools provide another important source of community for parents and children but also reflect segregation between communities. Research suggests that parental involvement in schools promotes higher school quality and better child outcomes.[109] But given there is wide variation in the effectiveness of schools from one district to the next, the neighborhood in which one lives can be of great consequence. Concerns about school quality have driven an increase in residential segregation by income, as more affluent families increasingly cluster in the best school districts.[110]

At the national level, we have seen a growing rift between—to put it in terms that are too broad—cosmopolitan urban metropolises and traditional rural communities. This essentially regional segregation has bred antipathy, borne of a deficit of bridging social capital. As the scope of the federal government has grown and Washington has taken away more discretion from state and local governments, the stakes of our national politics have become higher. Traditionalists and cosmopolitans, threatened with ceding

authority to people with divergent values on the other side, have reacted with mutual hostility.

One open question is the impact that technology will have on our associational life. From email to text messaging to social networks to video chats, communications innovations have led to some dramatic shifts in the way we interact with each other. Some behaviors on the internet may be isolating, while others enable greater frequency of connection and larger breadth of connections with others. With virtual reality breakthroughs just over the horizon, it also remains to be seen whether the home entertainment revolution that has encompassed on-demand TV, streaming services, apps, and video gaming will ultimately promote or retard investment in social capital.

Trends in Community Life

Being Social

The data are not entirely consistent, but it appears that the time we spend interacting with others socially has changed less than many earlier observers believed. A decade ago, media reports widely publicized a study that the number of Americans who have no one with whom to discuss an important issue had risen dramatically over the prior 30 years.[111] However, after reanalyses of the data and new evidence, the consensus today appears to be that it has risen only modestly if at all.[112]

Entertaining friends in one's home has become less common since the early 1970s, but apparently Americans are making up for it by doing more with friends outside the home.[113] The percent of adults who say they spend a social evening with "friends outside the neighborhood" at least several times a week was stable between 1974 and 2016, at about 19 to 24 percent.[114] Reinforcing these findings, time-use surveys suggest that the combined time adults spend engaged in social activities at home, visiting the homes of others, going to parties, or attending events has not changed much between the early 1970s and today. Nor has the time spent engaged in any activities (these or other ones) with friends.[115]

The biggest change in informal social life outside the home and workplace is that socializing has become rarer between neighbors. Between 1974 and 2016, the percent of adults who say they spend a social evening with a neighbor at least several times a week fell from 30 percent to 19 percent.[116] In part, this is likely a consequence of suburbanization and declining population density.[117] Relatedly, Americans are less reliant on public spaces and amenities and more so on private ones than in the past. For instance, we increasingly rely on private gyms and swimming pools, and we are less likely to use public transit or to carpool.[118] The movement into the workforce of married women and mothers is another important factor behind declining neighborliness. When more mothers were homemakers, social interaction was more centered around the neighborhood and its children.

The rise of the internet and the technology that connects us to it has also likely reduced interaction with neighbors. We can now connect more with those we care most about through email, text messaging, video chats, and social media, while face-to-face interactions with neighbors with whom we have less in common are increasingly unnecessary.[119]

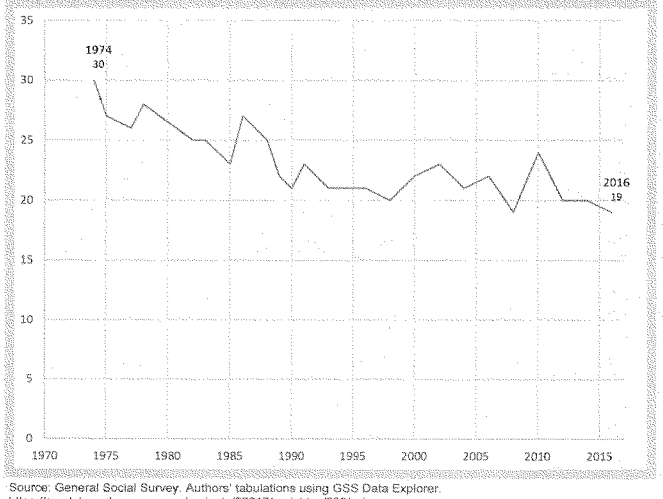
Suburbanization, expanded economic options for women, and communications technological development all reflect rising affluence. As our society has grown richer, the impetus to interact with our neighbors—reflecting their proximity rather than our commonalities—has diminished. In response, we have retreated into more private lives shared with those with whom we connect most easily, regardless of whether they live next door or across the country. In a sense, this shift mirrors the rise of romantic love and personal similarity as criteria for mate selection over traditional pragmatic economic concerns and geographic convenience.

Social Segregation

From an even broader perspective, and a more problematic one, technology has also allowed us to interact less—either in-person or online—with anyone whose values or opinions are different than our own.[120] That has likely contributed to a breakdown in

bridging social capital confined not just to our neighbors but to our fellow citizens generally. And while we may be interacting less with our neighbors than in the past, on a number of dimensions we seem to care more who our neighbors are than we used to.

Percent of Adults Spending a Social Evening with a Neighbor at Least Several Times a Week, 1974-2016



Source: General Social Survey. Authors' tabulations using GSS Data Explorer. https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/522/vshow.

On the one hand, residential segregation by race has declined since 1970 (especially between blacks and whites, where it has always been highest) or held stable.[121] On the other hand, income segregation has risen sharply since 1970, particularly during the 1980s and 2000s.[122] Between 1970 and the early 2010s, the share of families in large metropolitan areas who lived in middle-income neighborhoods declined from 65 percent to 40 percent. Over that same time period the share of families living in poor

neighborhoods rose from 19 percent to 30 percent, and those living in affluent neighborhoods rose from 17 percent to 30 percent. Economic segregation also grew in smaller metropolitan areas.[123]

Trust

If Americans are less social with those outside their circle of friends and family, and if they are more socially and physically segregated from them, then they are also less trusting of them. Between 1972 and 2016, the share of adults who thought most people could be trusted declined from 46 percent to 31 percent.[124] Similarly, between 1974 and 2016, the number of Americans expressing a great deal or fair amount of trust in the judgment of the American people "under our democratic system about the issues facing our country" fell from 83 percent to 56 percent.[125]

Americans have also become less trusting of many institutions. Between 1972 and 2012, the share of adults who said they trusted "the government in Washington to do what is right" most or all of the time declined from 53 percent to 22 percent.[126] Over the same period, trust in public office holders and candidates for office fell; the same was true of state government and of all three branches of the federal government. Trust in the federal government to handle both domestic and international policy also fell.[127]

The breakdown in trust and confidence was not confined to government. Trust in the mass media's reporting of the news also fell; between 1972 and 2016, the share of Americans saying they trusted the media a great deal or a fair amount declined from 68 percent to 32 percent.[128] Confidence in banks fell, as did confidence in newspapers, organized religion, public schools, organized labor, big business, and the medical system.[129]

Despite this dramatic deterioration, there are signs that closer to home, Americans remain trusting of local institutions, and their interpersonal relationships are healthier. Trust in local government, for instance, actually rose over these years.[130] And Americans are very satisfied with their friendships. In a 2003 Gallup poll, Americans

were more satisfied with their friendships than their religion and spirituality, romantic lives, health, career, money, and personal growth. They were more satisfied with their friends than with where they lived or with the recreational aspect of their lives. Only their family elicited more satisfaction.[131]

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement encompasses a vast array of activities, though there are few good data sources providing national data extending back to the early 1970s. The share of adults who said they had done any volunteering in the previous year is no lower today than it was in the early 1970s. One in four indicated they had volunteered in 1974 and in 2015.[132] Among those who did any volunteering, though, Americans devoted more time in 2015. Between 1974 and 2015, the share reporting volunteering for at least 100 hours increased from 28 percent to 34 percent.[133] Putnam finds an increase in volunteerism between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, driven entirely by adults under 25 and (especially) ages 60 and higher.[134] We found the increase occurred among men younger than 25 and older than 44 years old.[135]

Participation in voluntary organizations, in contrast, appears to have declined. Between 1974 and 2004, the share of Americans who participated in one of sixteen kinds of voluntary associations fell from 75 percent to 62 percent.[136] Harvard political scientist Theda Skocpol has argued persuasively that

> *professionally managed advocacy groups and institutions have moved to the fore, while representatively governed, nation-spanning voluntary membership federations—especially those with popular or cross-class memberships—have lost clout in national public affairs and faded from the everyday lives of most Americans.*[137]

Although these more professionalized advocacy groups and organizations have found ways to sustain themselves financially, it is clear they are a less participatory form of association. Large and remote private associations, Robert Nisbet noted,

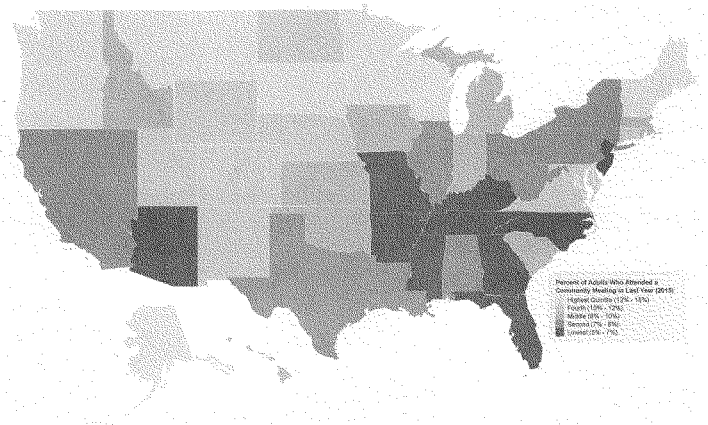
> *will become as centralized and as remote as the national State itself unless these great organizations are rooted in the smaller relationships which give meaning to the ends of the large associations.*[138]

Political engagement, too, has diminished over time. According to federal surveys, between 1972 and 2012, the share of the voting-age population that was registered to vote fell from 72 percent to 65 percent, and the trend was similar for the nonpresidential election years of 1974 and 2014. Correspondingly, between 1972 and 2012, voting rates fell from 63 percent to 57 percent (and fell from 1974 to 2014).[139]

Fewer people attended a political meeting or rally over time as well, and fewer worked for a political party or candidate, although these activities were uncommon even in 1972.[140] Between 1972 and 2008, the share of people saying they follow "what's going on in government and public affairs" declined from 36 percent to 26 percent.[141] That said, between 1972 and 2012, the share of Americans who tried to persuade someone else to vote a particular way increased from 32 percent to 40 percent.[142]

All in all, then, the domain of "community" appears to have shrunk over time. We spend less time with neighbors and in groups, both of which can involve social interaction with people we do not know well or with whom we share little in common. It is therefore unsurprising that we trust those outside our immediate circle of family and friends less than in the past, whether people in general or individuals represented by large institutions. Of course, these are exactly the relationships needed to collectively develop community, the feeling of being connected to each other and of being part of something bigger than our close personal network.

Percent of Adults Who Attended a Community Meeting in the Last Year, by State, 2015



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, September 2015 Volunteer Supplement
See interactive map online here: https://lee.senate.gov/acp/atten/ance.html

Working Together

The centrality of work in America means that it is for many people the focus of associational life. Whether in the carpool lane, offsite at lunch, in the break room, at the holiday party, behind the counter during down times, out on business trips, or post-work at the bar or on the softball field, a significant part of our social lives is spent with our coworkers.

For some, work is simply a means to an end, but to many others it is also a source of meaning and purpose, belonging, pride, friendship, and community.[143] In 2006, over one in four workers affirmed that their "main satisfaction in life comes from work."[144] The General Social Survey asks respondents, "If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working?" In 2016, seven in ten workers—no fewer than in 1973—said they would keep working.[145] Similarly, 70 percent agreed that they would "enjoy having a paying job even if I did not need that money."[146]

Observers such as Ross Douthat have pointed out that the social features of work impart important benefits not confined to the career-minded:

> *Even a grinding job tends to be an important source of social capital, providing everyday structure for people who live alone, a place to meet friends and kindle romances for people who lack other forms of community, a path away from crime and prison for young men, an example for children and a source of self-respect for parents.*[147]

Conversely, unemployment is associated with lower levels of subjective wellbeing.[148]

Work is inherently a cooperative and associational activity. Like family, community, and religion, work in its best form draws us out of ourselves toward the service of others and society. It depends on social norms of trust, trustworthiness, and cooperation that allow modern societies to flourish.[149] Workplaces rich in social capital will tend to be more effective. As Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak write:

> *Social capital makes an organization, or any cooperative group, more than a collection of individuals intent on achieving their own private purposes. Social capital bridges the space between people. Its characteristic elements and indicators include high levels of trust, robust personal networks and vibrant communities, shared understandings, and a sense of equitable participation in a joint enterprise—all things that draw individuals together into a group. This kind of connection supports collaboration, commitment, ready access to knowledge and talent, and coherent organizational behavior.*[150]

One open question is whether workplace social ties are qualitatively or quantitatively sufficient to make up for lost social ties outside of work. Putnam, for example, concludes from his evaluation of workplace connections that "the balance of evidence speaks against the hopeful hypothesis that American social capital has not disappeared but simply moved into the workplace."[151] For him and others, work activity is inherently utilitarian and self-interested, involving as it does customers and profit-seeking firms, bosses and employees. Many also believe, like Putnam, that job instability and insecurity has risen, undermining the creation of strong social connections on the job.

Trends in Work-Related Associational Life

Time Spent with Coworkers off the Job

There is little data available on social interaction with coworkers, on or off the job. However, time use data indicate that we are spending less time with our coworkers off the job than in the past. Between the mid-1970s (1975-76) and 2012, the average amount of time Americans between the ages of 25 and 54 spent with their coworkers outside the workplace fell from about two-and-a-half hours per week to just under one hour.[152]

Time Devoted to Work and Participation in the Workforce

Time at work (or getting to work) has implications for social capital on the job and for associational life outside of work. Trend data on what we do together at work is

generally unavailable, so we focus on how time spent working affects the other domains of associational life.

Median commuting times have risen, but only modestly (from 22 to 25 minutes between 1980 and 2015).[153] It is possible, too, that longer commutes reflect a tradeoff against benefits from living further away from work, such as time with family. As a share of trips or miles driven, commutes declined in importance between 1969 and 2009.[154] The share of workers living and working in different counties was 26 percent in 1970 and 27 percent in the second half of the 2000s (2006 to 2010).[155]

American adults spent the same amount of time at work in 2012 as in the mid-1970s (1975-76).[156] This stability, however, masks a more complicated story. More adults are either in school or retired than 45 years ago. Among 25- to 54-year-olds, time at work rose 4 percent. The story was very different for men and women though.

Between the mid-1970s and 2012, hours at work rose 27 percent among women 25-54 years old.[157] In part that was because the share of women with any hours of work on a given day increased from 36 percent to 42 percent, but working women also spent 10 percent more time at work than they used to.

These trends reflect the final 20 years of the "quiet revolution"—the dramatic increase in work among women (particularly married women).[158] Just one-third of women between the ages of 25 and 54 (35 percent) were in the labor force in 1948, but that figure rose steadily through the mid-1990s.[159] In 2015, 74 percent of prime-working-age women were in the labor force.

A long overdue advance toward equality, the quiet revolution unavoidably shifted the mix of social relationships from the home and neighborhood to the workplace, requiring greater reliance on markets for child care. One consequence for associational life was that volunteer and community-based work previously done outside of the workforce shifted to professionalized (and paid) work in the formal economy or disappeared altogether.[160] One need not look longingly back on the era to recognize that the

traditional breadwinner-homemaker family underlying society until recent decades did have the advantage of creating a significant and thriving sphere for associational life outside the world of commerce and production. Women outside the paid workforce were not only homemakers, they were community-makers.

The quiet revolution did not have to be so consequential for associational life. The shift of more women spending more time in the workforce might have been met with a corresponding flow of men from paid employment into the roles of family caregiver and civic-minded neighbor. But while men have grown increasingly disconnected from work in recent decades, no such cultural shift has occurred to shore up community life. Men and women have, together and in the aggregate, prioritized individualist goals and professional pursuits over the sustenance of yesteryear's robust associational life. Between 1976 and 2015, the share of married parents with two workers rose from 54 percent to 65 percent, and the share in which both husband and wife worked full-time year-round rose from 15 percent to 36 percent.[161]

The decline in male labor force participation constitutes a second major economic shift with implications for associational life. Between 1970 and 2016, labor force participation for prime-working-age men declined from 96 percent to 89 percent.[162] Among men between the ages of 25 and 54, hours at work fell by 9 percent between the mid-1970s and 2012.[163] *Employed* men spent 10 percent more time at work in 2012—the same increase as among women. But while 68 percent of working-age men spent time at work on a given day in the mid-1970s, just 56 percent did in 2012. (Note that these daily averages include weekends, which lowers them considerably.)[164]

Work has become rarer, in particular, among men with less education. From the mid-1970s to 2012, hours at work fell by just 2 percent among men with a college degree or an advanced degree, compared with 14 percent among those with no more than a high school education.[165] (Even though far fewer men had, at most, a high school diploma or GED in 2012—9 percent of prime-working-age men versus 23 percent in 1975—

comparing the lowest-educated 9 percent of men in both years still produces a comparably large drop in hours at work.)[166]

For many of these men, work has disappeared as a source of social connection. A rising share of men receive disability benefits, which strongly discourage subsequent reentry into the workforce.[167] Between 1970 and 2010, male Social Security disability recipients (all of whom previously worked) doubled as a share of adult men.[168] Changes in health status associated with the aging of the population explain less than half that increase, and other changes in the workplace, health care, and health status would have predicted declines in disability receipt.[169]

The rise in incarceration (in the wake of increasing violent crime rates) has also isolated many former offenders.[170] They and others passing through the criminal justice system face barriers to work on account of their criminal records. The White House Council of Economic Advisers recently noted that, in 2008, an estimated 6.4 to 7.2 percent of the prime-age male population was formerly incarcerated, and "a potentially large fraction of this group is not participating in the workforce as a result of their incarceration."[171]

It would be less worrisome if able-bodied, non-incarcerated men out of the labor force were spending their time engaged in other kinds of constructive activity. But convergent pieces of evidence suggest a much less optimistic picture of these "men without work."[172] Nicholas Eberstadt, relying on time-use data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other sources, points out that "[t]heir routine, instead, typically centers on watching—watching TV, DVDs, Internet, hand-held devices, etc.—and indeed watching for an average of 2,000 hours a year, as if it were a full-time job."[173] A recent working paper by Mark Aguiar, Mark Bils, Kerwin Charles, and Erik Hurst suggests that among young men (age 21-30) the recent decline in their work hours has been matched by an increase in leisure, about three-quarters of which is taken up by video games.[174]

The concern is that, in Eberstadt's words,

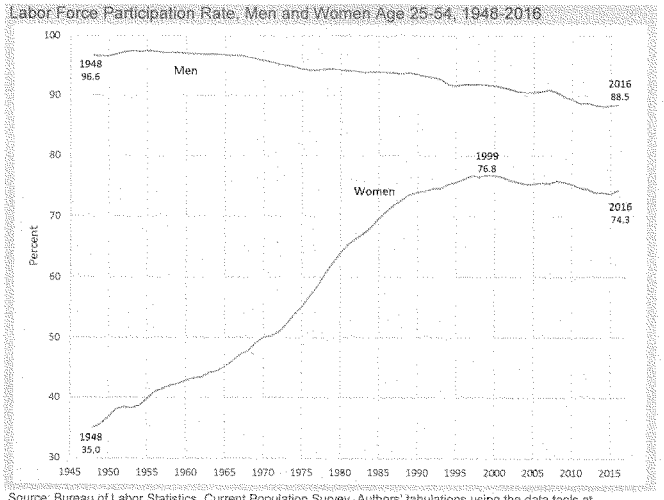
> *The death of work has ushered in additional costs at the personal and social levels that may be difficult to quantify but are easy to describe. These include the corrosive effects of prolonged idleness on personality and behavior, the loss of self-esteem and the respect of others that may attend a man's voluntary loss of economic independence, and the loss of meaning and fulfillment that work demonstrably brings to so many...*[175]

Given the exploding opioid crisis gripping the nation, Eberstadt's fears seem especially relevant.[176] The research of economist Alan Krueger, for instance, indicates that nearly one out of three prime-age men out of the labor force report having taken prescription pain medication on the previous day.[177]

Job Instability

Putnam advances the conventional view that the labor market has changed dramatically over time and is characterized by heightened job insecurity and instability.[178] These changes are claimed to have limited the development of on-the-job social capital, since fewer workers are at the same workplace for extended periods of time and they are anxious while there. "Alternative work arrangements"—temp jobs, independent contracting, the "gig economy," and the like—have become more common, for example. Reliable data are unavailable back to the 1970s, but between 1995 and 2015, workers in these arrangements grew from 9 percent to 16 percent of the workforce.[179] Between the mid-1970s and 2012, the percentage of employed Americans who worked from home on a typical day and spent no time at the workplace increased from 3 percent to 7 percent.[180]

Labor Force Participation Rate, Men and Women Age 25-54, 1948-2016



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Authors' tabulations using the data tools at http://www.bls.gov/cps/.

But on a number of other dimensions, the labor market has changed less than is generally believed or has changed in ways that have increased time at work.[181] Part-time work, for instance, remains near its 1970 level, not substantially higher. Between that year and 2015, the share of employed men usually working part-time rose from 9 percent to just 12 percent, and the share of working women doing so fell from 26 percent to 25 percent.[182] Meanwhile, the share of the employed working year-round actually rose from 69 to 81 percent among men and from 49 to 76 percent among women.[183] Since 2004, median job tenure has been higher than its 1973 level, indicating that workers are staying in their jobs *longer* than in the past.[184] Even the drop in prime-working-age male labor force participation primarily reflects an increase in men who tell federal surveyors they do not want a job.[185]

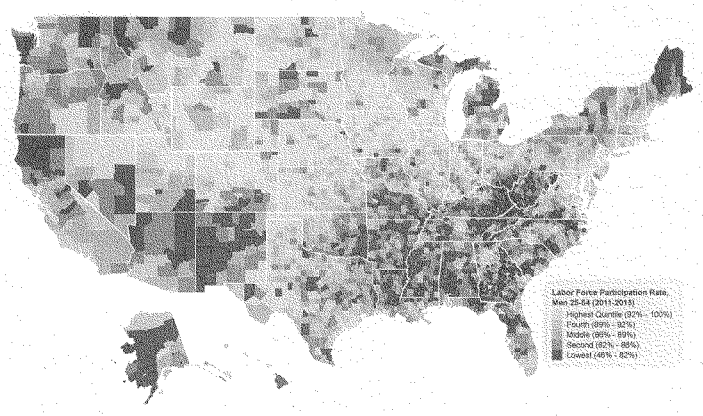
Organized Labor

Labor unions were once a primary source of association in work life—a focal point for community, camaraderie, and civic participation during the twentieth century.[186] But between 1970 and 2015, union membership declined from about 27 percent to 11 percent of all wage and salary workers.[187] There is little agreement about why this decline occurred, but consistent with falling participation in a range of voluntary associations, one study concluded that a large part of the drop in union membership between 1977 and 1991 reflected declining interest in joining.[188]

It is noteworthy that at the same time that union membership has declined, formal occupational licensing rules have been steadily on the rise.[189] Between 1965 and 2010, the percent of the workforce with some form of license or formal certification increased from less than 10 percent to nearly 25 percent.[190] While formalized licensing and certification regimes may substitute (for good and ill) for many of the benefits to specific workers previously achieved through unionization, it does so in a much less associative way.

While data on associational life in the workplace is hard to come by, it appears that we spend less time off the job with our coworkers than in the past. There has been a surprising amount of stability over the past 45 years in features of the workforce and the economy that would be expected to affect social capital. The giant exception involves the changes in labor force participation among men and women, between whom the longer-term trends move in opposite directions. These shifts have profoundly affected what we do together, outside of work and presumably inside the workplace too.

Prime-Age Male Labor Force Participation Rate, by County, 2011-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
See interactive map online here: https://lee.senate.gov/scp/lfp.html

Conclusion

Our review of changes in associational life over the past several decades suggests that in many—but not all—ways, what we do together has become more circumscribed than it used to be.

The Social Capital Project will explore some of these worrisome trends in the years to come, as well as seek to understand geographic variation in the health of associational life, such as that displayed in the maps embedded in this report. We also intend to analyze what promotes or impedes social capital formation (e.g., cultural values, economic changes, or segregation), as well as the possible effects of a healthy associational life (e.g., on economic mobility). The project will assess some of the day's most important policy issues that are related to the presence or absence of social capital, including declining male labor force participation, family formation, and rising "deaths of despair."[191] And we will highlight other trends and patterns that are underappreciated and relevant for policy.

As for this report, a few big-picture conclusions regarding trends in associational life are in order. To the extent that there was a golden age of associational life in the mid-twentieth century, the sense of loss we feel seems inextricably linked to the growth of two-worker families on the one hand and single-parent families on the other.

The typical child today will not make it to 16 without experiencing single parenthood. Less acknowledged in policy debates, the adults in fragile families also suffer when their relationship deteriorates. With fewer children in intact families, fewer adults in stable long-term relationships, and less-happy marriages than in the past, it is no wonder that Americans are nostalgic for a time—perhaps idealized—when family life was healthier.

Meanwhile, the increase in dual-income families has sometimes strained family life (even as it has improved purchasing power), and it has depleted the social capital of neighborhoods and communities. Working families today often complain of a "time crunch"—a generally unavoidable conflict between the demands of work life and of

family. But the increasingly central pursuit of material ends and professional goals has crowded out the demands of a robust community life no less than those of family life.

This is not to say that the shift to two-worker families has not come with benefits. In addition to the higher material standard of living it has brought, women now enjoy more economic freedom than they did in years past. It may be that for most people, the benefits of this fundamental shift outweigh the costs. Nor should we conclude that working women are to blame for declines in social capital; there is no reason that men could not have replenished the lost investment in family and community life that resulted from the "quiet revolution." We should acknowledge, however, that spending more time on work and giving more attention to career has come with tradeoffs.

Importantly, the increases in dual-income and single-parent families reflect the rising affluence of our nation, not growing hardship. Sending a second earner into the workforce entails costs—less time available for home maintenance, childrearing, and meal preparation, and expenses for work-related needs such as childcare or a second car. Technological innovation reduced the amount of time it took to maintain homes and prepare meals, and rising incomes allowed families to incur work-related expenses. The increase in work among married women was steady, and its start predated by two decades the stagnation in men's pay that began in the 1970s.[192] It was a phenomenon common to developed nations around the world and co-occurred with rising educational attainment among women, delayed marriage, and reduced and delayed fertility.[193]

Even the growth in single parenthood reflects rising affluence. More women are able to support children on their own (with or without child support) than in the past, due to their increased earnings. So too, the public safety net for single parents, while by no means allowing a lavish existence, is sufficiently generous to facilitate single parenthood. Whatever one's feelings about the proper size of the safety net, it is clearly more extensive than it was 50 years ago.

And despite common claims that the increase in single motherhood lower down the income ladder reflects a decline in "marriageable men," men's pay—properly

measured—has stagnated at historical highs or even risen a bit, not declined.[194] What has changed is that the gap between what men and women earn has narrowed greatly.[195] Indeed, the causality may run in the other direction—men may be less attached to the labor force because we expect them to contribute less to raising children than in the past.

More generally, rising affluence has made social capital investment less necessary than in the past. In the same way that single parents need a spouse less than they would have 50 years ago, we are rich enough that we need less material support from our extended families and neighbors. Investing in social capital always entailed costs—favors owed, personal awkwardness tolerated, privacy lost. As we have grown richer, we have turned increasingly to formal market transactions to meet our various needs. Instead of calling on the neighborhood handyman, we hire a contractor.

Similarly, our willingness to endure the constraints imposed by organized religion has also eroded with affluence. (A profound irony of our affluent society's diminished need for constraining commitments to associational life is that it is among the best-off segments of society where these commitments remain strongest. Religious adherence and family stability, for instance, have deteriorated less among upper-educated Americans than among the lower-educated.)

As a consequence of rising affluence, our associational life has contracted. We are increasingly focused on work and professional goals and on our circles of family and friends. Technology allows us to maintain stronger ties with the people most important to us, whether they be near or far, than with the couple who lives across the hall of our apartment building.

But our turn toward the private has come with costs. We no longer relate to each other so easily beyond our inner circles.[196] The connective tissue that facilitates cooperation has eroded, leaving us less equipped to solve problems together within our communities. So, too, are we less able to collaborate across communities. Instead of solving problems locally, we increasingly turn to the federal government—an approach

that puts problem-solving in the hands of policymakers with little local knowledge of community problems and that leads to polarized (and polarizing) laws that offend the values of large swaths of the populace.

We may be materially richer than in the past. But with atrophied social capabilities, with a diminished sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves, and with less security in our family life, we are much poorer for doing less together.

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social identities and trivial polarizations in public debates." See Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 232.

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[18] "Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015," Pew Research Center, November 23, 2015, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/public-trust-in-government-1958-2015/. Starting around 1980, partisans report higher levels of trust when a president is in power who is of the same party (e.g., Republicans reported much higher rates of trust in the federal government when Reagan was president, and Democrats report much higher rates of trust when Obama was president; overall, trust rates have still markedly declined).

[19] See, for example, Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*; Jacob Levy, *Rationalism, Pluralism, and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Nancy Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Don E. Eberly, ed., *The Essential Civil Society Reader: Classic Essays in the American Civil Society Debate* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000); Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); and Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

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[23] Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, *To Empower People: From State to Civil Society*, ed. Michael Novak (Washington, DC: The AEI Press, 1996), accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/-to-empower-people_140638228440.pdf.

[24] Unfortunately for our project, "mediating structures" is today not as wildly popular a term as Peter Berger believed it to be. He stated, perhaps overzealously, "Soon, the term itself, *mediating structures*, became a household word, frequently cited without quotation marks and without reference to our little book. We did not complain, indeed, felt flattered. It is, after all, gratifying if a word one has coined comes into usage as a common noun—like *coke*, or *xeroxing*, or *fridge*." See Berger and Neuhaus, *To Empower People*, 148.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] There are two fundamental challenges that are rarely adequately addressed in the literature. First, researchers must account for alternative potential factors that may affect outcomes and that differ between married and single adults. Perhaps depressed people are less likely to marry, so the fact that married people are happier might just reflect the fact that they would have been happier than those who stayed single regardless of who did and did not marry.

Second, researchers must account for self-selection into marital status. Studies rarely assess, for instance, the effect of divorce on children after holding constant levels of couple hostility with each other. Doing so might reveal that children of low-hostility couples do better if their parents stay married, while children of high-hostility couples do better if their parents divorce. So "marriage" would be beneficial for the former but harmful for the latter.

Even more problematic, if most couples with high hostility toward each other divorce, while most couples with low hostility do not, then it is unclear how to even compare the children of married and divorced parents (holding constant levels of hostility) given a survey that includes both. An apples-to-apples comparison may not be possible.

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[51] Janice Compton and Robert A. Pollak, "Family proximity, childcare, and women's labor force attachment," *Journal of Urban Economics* 79(2013), 72-90, find that 90 percent of household heads in 1988 who lived in the state where they "grew up" had a mother living in the same state. Moreover, a majority of adults living in their childhood state lived within ten miles of their mother, and 85 percent lived within 100 miles. In contrast, barely a quarter of household heads who did not live in the state where they grew up lived in the same state as their mother, and 70 percent lived more than 100 miles from their mother.

[52] These estimates come from the 1% metro sample of the 1970 decennial census and from the 2015 American Community Survey, both accessed via the IPUMS-USA website. See Steven Ruggles, et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0* [Machine-readable database], (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015), accessed May 1, 2017, http://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V6.0.; Scott Winship finds that the share of native-born Americans age 30 to 39 who lived in their birth state peaked in the 1930s or 1940s and was stable from 1970 to 2010 in "When Moving Matters: Residential and Economic Mobility Trends in America, 1880-2010," economics21 Policy Report No. 2, November 2015, Figure 41, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/when-moving-matters-residential-and-economic-mobility-trends-america-1880-2010-8048.html.

[53] "Spend evening with relatives," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/521/vshow.

[54] The 1975 figure is from the U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey, February 1975,"Arrangements Made for the Daytime Care of Children 3 to 6 Years Old by Race, Age of Child, and Labor Force Status of Mother: February 1975, table 2, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1976/demo/p20-298/tab-02.pdf. The 2011 upper bound is from the U.S. Census Bureau, "Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: 2011 – Detailed Tables," Employment Status of Mother and Selected Characteristics, table 1B, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2008/demo/2011-tables.html. It is an upper bound because respondents to the survey could indicate more than one child care arrangement. The estimate divides the sum of (1) children of employed mothers cared for by her or the other parent, (2) children of non-employed mothers cared for by her or the other parent, and (3) children of non-employed mothers with no child care arrangements who are not in school or in self-care by the number of three- and four-year-olds. The 2011 lower bound is from the National Center for Education Statistics, "National Household Education Surveys Program," Percentage of children from birth through age 5 and not yet in kindergarten participating in various weekly nonparental care arrangements, by child and family characteristics: 2012, accessed May 1, 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/nhes/tables/nonrelative_care.asp. It represents the share of children ages three to five (and not in kindergarten) who have no non-parental arrangement in which they receive child care at least once a week.

[55] Giulia M. Dotti Sani and Judith Treas, "Educational Gradients in Parents' Child-Care Time Across Countries, 1965-2012," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78 no. 4 (2016); Suzanne M. Bianchi, John P. Robinson, and Melissa A. Milkie, *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

[56] Our review of a variety of American time-use surveys stretching back to the 1960s suggested that the earlier surveys that predated the federal American Time Use Survey (which has run since 2003) do not provide comparable estimates of time spent with family. Most of the estimates show a sizable and anomalous discontinuity between 1998 and 2003 that suggests methodological or survey quality differences. However the sources cited in the previous note find rising parental time to have occurred across a number of developed countries.

[57] Claude S. Fischer, *Still Connected: Family and Friends in America Since 1970* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011); Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

[58] Ibid.

[59] U.S. Census Bureau, "Living Arrangements of Adults 18 and Over, 1967 to Present," Historical Living Arrangements of Adults Table AD-3, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/adults.html; U.S. Census Bureau, "Unmarried Couples of the Opposite Sex, by Presence of Children: 1960 to present," Historical Living Arrangements of Adults Table UC-1, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/adults.html. These estimates add the share living with a spouse, with a parent, or with other relatives from table AD-3. They then apply the percentage of cohabiters with children (from table UC-1) to the share of adults living with a cohabiter (from table AD-3) and add that in as well.

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[61] Paul Hemez, "Marriage Rate in the U.S.: Geographic Variation, 2015," *Family Profiles*, FP-16-22, National Center for Family & Marriage Research, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/hemez-marriage-rate-us-geo-2015-fp-16-22.html.

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[65] Sheela Kennedy and Steven Ruggles, "Breaking Up Is Hard to Count: The Rise of Divorce in the United States, 1980-2010,"*Demography* 51, no. 2(2014): 587-598, Figure 3.

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[90] Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), cited in Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 73-74.

[91] The estimate (71 percent) is from 1975 and taken from the U.S. Census Bureau, "Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994," Religious Preference, Church Membership, and Attendance: 1957 to 1991, table 85, 70, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1994/compendia/statab/114ed/1994-02.pdf.

[92] In the General Social Survey, 57 percent of adults indicated they did so in 1972 ("How often r attends religious services," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/294/vshow). In the American National Election Studies, 50 percent indicated the same that year (American National Election Studies, "Church Attendance (2), 5 categories 1970-2012," *The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior*, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab1b_5b.htm).

[93] The membership estimate is for 2016 and from Gallup (see "Religion," Gallup, In Depth: Topics A to Z, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx). Attendance figures are from the General Social Survey (44 percent in 2016) and the American National Election Studies (42 percent in 2012). See the previous note for sources.

Using the estimates presented in Lyman Stone, "The Beginning for the American Church," *In a State of Migration*, Medium, April 21, 2017, accessed May 1, 2017, https://medium.com/migration-issues/the-beginning-for-the-american-church-6bb5654a91fc, and dividing by population estimates indicates a drop in religious membership from 66 percent in 1973 to 60 percent in 2015. Stone adjusts data from the Association of Religion Data Archives using various sources and interpolations.

[94] Roughly, religious adherence, as reported by churches and congregations, declined from around 60 percent to around 50 percent between the early 1970s and 2010 (compared with a drop in church membership from 71 to 61 percent in the Gallup data from 1975 to 2010).

The religious adherence data were downloaded from "Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1971 (States)," Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/CMS71ST.asp, and "U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2010 (State File)," Association of Religious Data Archives, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RCMSST10.asp. Data for 1971-73 were originally collected by Glenmary Research Center in Washington, DC. (D.W. Johnson, P. Picard, and Bernard Quinn, "Churches and Church Membership in the United States," *Glenmary Research Center*, 1974.) Data for 2009-11 are from a survey administered by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, with the data collection carried out by the Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center in Lenexa, Kansas. (Grammich et al., "2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study," *Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies*, 2012.)

In the 1971-73 data, each denomination defined "total adherents" and "communicant, confirmed or full members" as they saw fit. Where adherents were not reported, Glenmary Research Center multiplied communicants by the ratio of the county population to the county population over age 13. In the 2009-11 data, denominations were instructed to identify adherents as "all members, including full members, their children and the estimated number of other participants who are not considered members; for example, the 'baptized,' 'those not confirmed,' 'those not eligible for Communion,' 'those regularly attending services,' and the like." Some denominations provided membership estimates and suggestions for converting to adherents. In other cases, ASARB converted them using the same approach used by Glenmary Research Center.

The 2009-11 survey was more inclusive than past efforts, including special efforts to reach out to "independent or non-denominational churches, Jewish synagogues, historically African American churches, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims." In order to produce comparable estimates for 1971-73 and 2009-11, therefore, it was necessary to restrict the denominations included in the two surveys so that any trend would not reflect more complete data collection in the more recent wave. Otherwise, the adherence trend estimated would be biased upward. At the same time, restricting the trend analysis to denominations present in both waves would result in the exclusion of churches and congregations formed after the early 1970s and would tend to bias the trend downward.

The strategy we used was to first exclude Washington, DC adherents from the 2009-11 data, as they were not included in 1971-73. Next, we identified all denominations with adherents in both waves. We then added any denomination with adherents that existed in 1971-73 but was consistently absent from waves in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010, under the assumption that such denominations either were folded into other ones or ceased to exist. Next, we added adherents from any denomination that (1) existed in 2009-11, (2) was present in a preceding wave, but if so (3) was present continuously in all waves while it was in any of them. The assumption here is that these were denominations that originated after 1971-73. This strategy excluded denominations appearing in the 2010 wave for the first time, some of which may have formed between 2000 and 2010.

We also added a number of Mennonite, Amish, and Friends denominations from 2009-11 that had no match in 1971-73 because they appear to just reflect a finer grouping of the same kind of adherents as were recorded in the past. Finally, we added adherents from "non-denominational Christian Churches," which were included in the data for the first time in 2009-11. Their omission from earlier waves may bias the trend in adherence upward, but excluding them risked missing a quickly growing segment of the religious landscape.

Unfortunately, there were no estimates of Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu adherents in the 1971-73 data, so we exclude them from the 2009-11 data as well. Further, there are no estimates for the major African American churches in 1971-73, so they too are excluded from 2009-11. (The 2009-11 figures for black churches are badly under-estimated regardless.) We then adjusted the denominators in our rate estimates to exclude African Americans and Jews, which changed the 50-percent-to-44-percent decline to a 58-percent-to-52-percent decline. There is little reason to think that the trend in adherence would differ if adherents from the excluded denominations were available.

[95] Levin, *Fractured Republic*, 66; Ross Douthat, "Save the Mainline," *New York Times*, April 15, 2017, accessed May 1, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/15/opinion/sunday/save-the-mainline.html.

[96] Levin, *Fractured Republic*; Murray, *Coming Apart*; Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

[97] W. Bradford Wilcox et al., "No Money, No Honey, No Church: The Deinstitutionalization of Religious Life Among the White Working Class," in *Religion, Work and Inequality*, ed. Lisa A. Keister, John Mecarthy, and Roger Finke, vol. 23 of *Research in the Sociology of Work* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2012), 227-250; Murray, *Coming Apart*.

[98] The shares having been raised in a religion are from 1973 and 2016 and taken from the General Social Survey ("Religion in which raised," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/341/vshow). The shares reporting no religious preference are from the 1972 and 2016 GSS ("Rs religious preference," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/287/vshow), indicating a rise from 5 percent to 22 percent, and from Gallup polls in 1972 and 2016 ("Religion," Gallup, In Depth: Topics A to Z, accessed May 2, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx), indicating a rise from 5 percent to 18 percent.

[99] The 65-to-41 percent drop is from Gallup ("Religion," In Depth: Topics A to Z). The 36-to-20 percent drop is from the General Social Survey ("Confidence in organized religion," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/450/vshow).

[100] Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*.

[101] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 489.

[102] Scrivens and Smith, "Four Interpretations."

[103] See, for example, Alejandro Portes, "Downsides of social capital," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 52 (2014): 18407-18408.

[104] For a discussion of "bridging" and "bonding" social capital, see Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 22-24.

[105] Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[106] Brenda L. Murphy, "Locating Social Capital in Resilient Community-Level Emergency Management," *Natural Hazards* 41, no. 2 (2007): 297-315.

[107] Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, "The Effects of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility II: County-Level Estimates," (Working Paper No. 23002, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017), accessed May 2, 2017, http://www.nber.org/papers/w23002). See also Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

[108] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 312.

[109] Ibid., 304.

[110] Ann Owens, Sean F. Reardon, and Christopher Jencks, "Income Segregation between Schools and School Districts," *American Educational Research Journal* 53, no. 4 (2016): 1159-1197.

[111] Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Matthew E. Brashears, "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 3 (2006): 353-375.

[112] Anthony Paik and Kenneth Sanchagrin, "Social Isolation in America: An Artifact," *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 3 (2013): 339-360; Claude S. Fischer, "Comment on McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears, ASR, June 2006: The 2004 GSS Finding of Shrunken Social Networks: An Artifact?" *American Sociological Review* 74 (2009): 657-669. For a discussion of the stability of the "core discussion network," see Mario Luis Small, Vontrese Deeds Pamphile, and Peter McMahan, "How stable is the core discussion network?" *Social Networks* 40 (2015): 90-102; and on the nature of the core discussion network more generally, see Mario Luis Small, "Weak ties and the core discussion network: Why people regularly discuss important matters with unimportant alters," *Social Networks* 35 (2013), 470-483.

[113] Claude S. Fischer, *Still Connected: Family and Friends in America Since 1970* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

[114] "Spend evening with friends," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/523/vshow.

[115] Authors' analyses of American Heritage Time Use Study microdata ("American Heritage Time Use Study Extract Builder," Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.ahtusdata.org/ahtus/), comparing 1975-76 with 2012. Total time on the four types of activity declined by 5 percent, or just over 40 minutes per week. Time spent with friends declined by 5 percent, or just under 15 minutes per week.

[116] "Spend evening with neighbor," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/522/vshow.

[117] While in the aggregate, persons-per-square-mile has increased in the United States, on a population-weighted basis, it has likely declined. For instance, from 2000 to 2010 aggregate persons-per-square-mile rose from 79.7 to 87.4, but on a population-weighted basis, it fell from 5,655 to 5,369. (See U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 CBSA Report Chapter 3 Data, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/tables/time-series/c2010sr-01/cbsa-report-chapter-3-data.xlsx.) These estimates are consistent; they simply reflect the fact that most people live in dense census tracts, but they increasingly live in less-dense ones, such as in suburbs. Large swaths of the United States are uninhabited or practically so, which is why the aggregate densities are so much lower.

[118] Joe Cortright, "Less in Common," *City Reports*, September 6, 2015, accessed May 1, 2017, http://cityobservatory.org/less-in-common/.

[119] Linda Poon, "Why Won't You Be My Neighbor?" *The Atlantic*, August 19, 2015, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.citylab.com/housing/2015/08/why-wont-you-be-my-neighbor/401762/.

[120] Joe Cortright, "Less in Common."

[121] John R. Logan and Brian J. Stults, "The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings from the 2010 Census," Census Brief prepared for Project US2010, March 24, 2011, accessed May 1, 2017, https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/Data/Report/report2.pdf.

[122] Sean F. Reardon and Kendra Bischoff, "The Continuing Increase in Income Segregation, 2007-2012," Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis, March 2016, accessed May 1, 2017, http://inequality.stanford.edu/news-events/center-news/continuing-increase-income-segregation. See also Tyler Cowen, *The Complacent Class: The Self-Defeating Quest for the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017).

[123] Reardon and Bischoff, "The Continuing Increase in Income Segregation." The more recent estimates pool American Community Survey data from 2010 through 2014. Segregation estimates are computed for the 117 metropolitan areas that had a population greater than 500,000 in 2007. Middle-income neighborhoods (census tracts) have median family incomes between two-thirds and 1.5 times the metropolitan area median.

[124] "Can people be trusted," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/441/vshow. Note: In the American National Election Studies data, the decline was from 46 percent to 34 percent between 1972 and 2008 (authors' analysis of microdata).

[125] "Trust in Government," Gallup, In Depth: Topics A to Z, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx.

[126] "Trust the Federal Government 1958-2012," American National Election Studies, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab5a_1.htm.

[127] "Trust in Government," Gallup; "Confidence in Institutions," Gallup, In Depth: Topics A to Z, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx.

[128] "Trust in Government," Gallup.

[129] "Confidence in Institutions," Gallup.

[130] "Trust in Government," Gallup.

[131] Joseph Carroll, "Americans Satisfied With Number of Friends, Closeness of Friendships," *Gallup*, March 5, 2004, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/10891/americans-satisfied-number-friends-closeness-friendships.aspx.

[132] The 1974 estimate represents Americans ages 14 and over and is from the Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement, reported in Phyllis Groom McCreary, *Americans Volunteer, 1974: A Statistical Study of Volunteers in the United States* (Washington, DC: ACTION, 1975). The 2015 estimate is from the authors' analyses of the Current Population Survey September Volunteer Supplement microdata, accessed May 10, 2017, https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/current-population-survey-volunteers-supplement. The 1974 statistics are calculated based on a population ages 14 and older. The 1989 and 2002-2015 statistics are based on a population ages 16 and older.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 128.

[135] Ibid.

[136] "Number of memberships," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/979/vshow.

[137] Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2003).

[138] Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, 255.

[139] U.S. Census Bureau, "Reported Voting and Registration by Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex and Age Groups: November 1964 to 2014," "Historical Reported Voting Rates Table A-1, accessed May 1, 2017, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/voting-historical-time-series.html. Note: These estimates are from the Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

[140] "Attended Political Meeting 1952-2012," American National Election Studies, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6b_2.htm; "Worked for a Party or Candidate 1952-2012," American National Election Studies, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6b_3.htm.

[141] Authors' calculations using American National Election Studies microdata.

[142] "Tried to Influence How Others Vote 1952-2012," American National Election Studies, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6b_1.htm.

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[144] "Satisfaction comes from work," General Social Survey, accessed May 1, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/2778/vshow.

[145] "If rich, continue or stop working," General Social Survey, accessed May 5, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/549/vshow.

[146] "Enjoy job even if $ not needed," General Social Survey, accessed May 5, 2017, https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/projects/27817/variables/4493/vshow.

[147] Ross Douthat, "A World Without Work," *New York* Times, February 23, 2013, accessed May 8, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/opinion/sunday/douthat-a-world-without-work.html.

[148] See, for example, John F. Helliwell and Haifang Huang, "New Measures of the Costs of Unemployment: Evidence from the Subjective Well-Being of 2.3 Million Americans" (Working Paper no. 16829, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011), accessed May 2, 2017, http://www.nber.org/papers/w16829.pdf; Andrew E. Clark, Yannis Georgellis, and Peter Sanfey, "Scarring: The Psychological Impact of Past Unemployment," *Economica* 68 (2001): 221-241.

[149] Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*.

[150] Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak, *In Good Company: How Social Capital Makes Organizations Work* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 4.

[151] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 92.

[152] Authors' computations from American Heritage Time Use Study, IPUMS Time Use, accessed May 10, 2017, https://www.ipums.org/timeuse.shtml.

[153] Authors' computations from 1980 decennial census data and 2015 American Community Survey, IPUMS-USA, using IPUMS Online Data Analysis System, accessed May 10, 2017, https://sda.usa.ipums.org.

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[156] Authors' computations from American Heritage Time Use Study, IPUMS Time Use. Note that "hours at work" differs from "hours worked" in two important ways. First, hours at work includes time spent at the workplace doing things other than one's job. Second, hours at work excludes people who work from home. Fortunately, trends appear similar for the two measures. Average hours per worker fell in the U.S. between 1975 and 2012, but by less than 3 percent. (See "Average annual hours actually worked per worker," Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed May 5, 2017, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS#.)

[157] Ibid.

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[159] Authors' tabulations of Current Population Survey data, using the data tools at Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.bls.gov/cps/.

[160] See, for example, Emma Green, "What America Lost as Women Entered the Workforce," *The Atlantic*, September 19, 2016.

[161] U.S. Census Bureau, "Work Experience of Husband and Wife—Married-Couple Families with Husband Working by Presence of Children Under 18 Years Old and Median and Mean Income: 1976 to 2015," Historical Income Tables: Families, table F-15, accessed May 5, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/time-series/historical-income-families/f15.xls. U.S. Census Bureau, "Work Experience of Husband and Wife—Married-Couple Families with Husband Working Full-Time, Year-Round by Presence of Children Under 18 Years Old and Median and Mean Income: 1976 to 2015," Historical Income Tables: Families, F-16, accessed May 5, 2017,; https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/time-series/historical-income-families/f16.xls; U.S. Census Bureau, "Work Experience of Husband and Wife—Married-Couple Families with Husband Not Working by Presence of Children Under 18 Years Old and Median and Mean Income: 1976 to 2015," Historical Income Tables: Families, F-17, accessed May 5, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/time-series/historical-income-families/f17.xls.

[162] Authors' tabulations of Current Population Survey data, using the data tools at U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.bls.gov/cps/.

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[164] Note, too, that since these figures are for time spent at work, the relevant indicator from the perspective of assessing social capital at work, they exclude the self-employed. The percent of men age 25 to 54 who were employed at any point in a given week fell from 89 percent in 1975 to 82.5 percent in 2012, a drop of 7 percent, (See U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, https://www.bls.gov/cps/, accessed May 5, 2017.)

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[176] Sam Quinones, *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2015).

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