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Institution:

Course Title:

Instructor:

Date:

Social Capital in the United States

1. **What is Social capital?**

Social capital refers to the networks, trusts and norms of social life that enable people to work more effectively together in pursuit of common objectives. Social capital is the link between the underneath social cleavages and the important community sectors through the links of networks, trusts and norms. Cooperation among people enhances services to interest social more groups; hence it is recommendable (Putnam, 664). A social capital may be formed between informal and illegal groups like the Michigan militia gangs, since they operate in a network with norms that enable for more effective cooperation among its members, albeit at the wider community's detriment. In essence, social capital means social connections in relation to norms and trust for the attendants. The social capital beneficiaries from the norms, networks and trust are empirically determined other than by definition. Social capital has multiple effects such as serving a civic purpose in political participation, which relates people to political institutions. It is important to note the difference between political participation and social capital in the sense, that taking part in a political process does not necessarily constitute creating a social capital.

2. **How can Social Capital be increased?**

Social capital can be increased by enhancing social interactions. For instance, taking part in a voting process or sending a check to a government institution does not create a social

capital, whereas sharing a meal with a friend in a restaurant embodies a social capital. Political movements right from the grassroots and other civic engagement groups enhance the creation of social capital. The social capital theory asserts that trust among people develop, as they continue to interact more and more with one another while the lesser interaction among people leads to loss of trust between them. Research findings reveal a strong correlation between civic engagement and social trust notwithstanding age, education, race, income controls and gender, etcetera. People, who come together in a network, are those who trust the network and this trend. There is a tree in different countries in the world, states in the U.S., and individuals and groups. Social trust and civic connections go together.

3. What causes the decrease of social capital?

Social capital decrease results from a number of factors such as people getting busier with little time to undertake many activities. Hard economic times and family responsibilities, suburbanization, residential mobility, changing roles of women and disruption of family ties and marriage, are among the things that cause social capital erosion (Putnam 671). Another factor that has led to the erosion of social capital is the changing roles of women, whereby women have moved into better paying jobs, hence changing traditional family setups in relation to roles and responsibilities. The American economy has significantly changed with the growth of branch firms, chain stores, and the service industry (Putnam 665). Social capital decrease particularly in the U.S. has also been attributed to most of the 1960s events like the Vietnam War that caused public apathy and Cultural Revolution showing increased drugs, sex and crime rates. Other factors include the rise of the welfare state, civil rights movement revolution, and increased communication and information technology such as the Television, the mobile phone and the internet.

4. Do you think things have changed since the writing of the article in 1995? Why or why not?

I think things have changed since the writing of this article, but for the worse. This is because the factors that cause social capital erosion have increased in the recent years as compared to 1995. The world has experienced increased terrorist attacks, especially the U.S., with the September 11th attack in 2001 at the World Trade Center. In addition, technology has dramatically transformed the telecommunication industry turning the world into a global village with increased connectivity capabilities (Putnam 674). Economic hard times have increased, with more failed marriages than before, hence piling pressure on family setups. More women have been empowered, thus securing better jobs that have made their roles and responsibilities to change in the society. Mobility and suburbanization have increased tremendously thus making people loosely tied to each new place they go to (Putnam 669).

Works Cited:

Putnam, Robert, D. *Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America*. *American Political Science Association journal*. 1995. Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 664-683. Print.