



CS 6474 Social Computing: Social Capital

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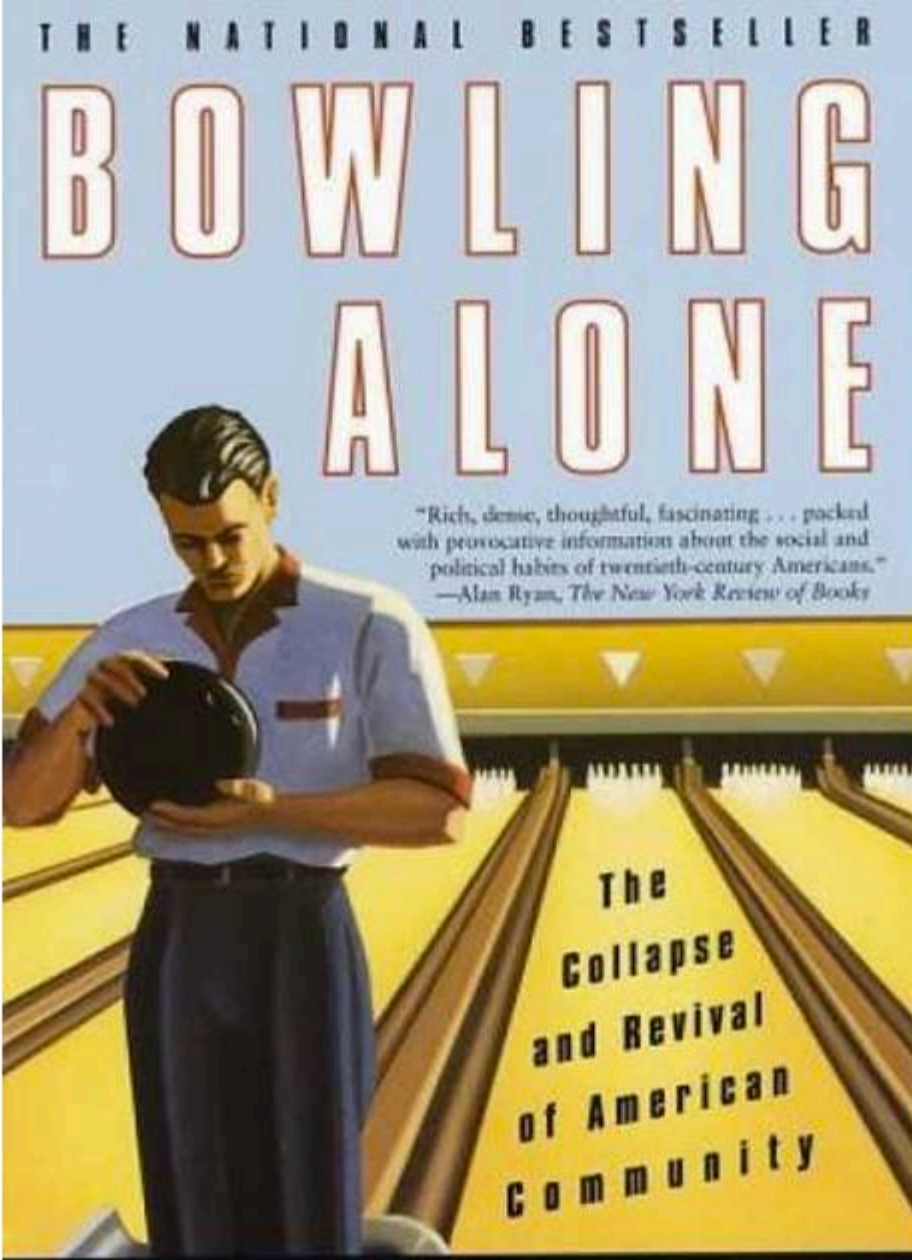
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Social capital broadly refers to the resources accumulated through the relationships among people (Coleman, 1988).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 14).

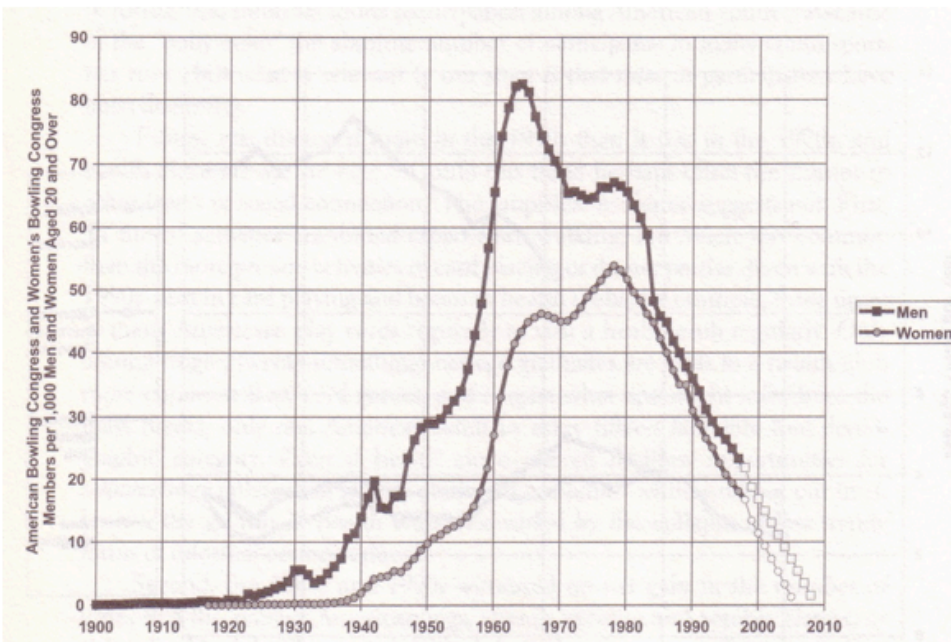
Social capital is defined as “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trust that arise from those networks” (Putnam, 2000)



Robert D. Putnam



Rise and Decline of League Bowling



Bonding and bridging social capital

Putnam's book was controversial
– he disregarded newer
organizations and forms of social
capital

Critics like sociologist Claude Fischer said that “Putnam neglects the emergence of new forms of supportive organizations on and off the Internet”

The Benefits of Facebook “Friends:” Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online SNS

Summary

- One of the earliest studies examining the relationship between the usage of Facebook and the formation and maintenance of social capital
- Survey study based on N=286 undergraduate students
- Findings:
 - Intensity of Facebook use was correlated with bridging and bonding social capital, however more for bridging than bonding
 - For users with low self-esteem and low life-satisfaction, Facebook use can promote psychological well-being
 - Facebook helps convert latent ties into weak ties
 - Facebook use supports the “poor gets richer” hypothesis

H1: Intensity of Facebook use will be positively associated with individuals' perceived bridging social capital.

H2: Intensity of Facebook use will be positively associated with individuals' perceived bonding social capital.

H3a: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bridging social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's self esteem.

H3b: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bridging social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's satisfaction with life.

H4a: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bonding social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's self esteem.

H4b: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bonding social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's satisfaction with life.

Social Capital on Facebook: Differentiating Uses and Users

Summary

- Goal: differentiate use of Facebook based on time spent on the site; compare between people varying in self-esteem and social communication skill
- Overcome bias of self-reported surveys by utilizing longitudinal data from server logs
 - Focus on longitudinal panel data from 415 Facebook users
- Characterize communication into directed and undirected
- Findings:
 - Directed communication helps maintenance of social ties; undirected communication leads to bridging
 - No relationship between number of friends and self-esteem
 - Passive use of Facebook to consume news assists those with lower social fluency as they draw value from their connections
 - Receiving messages—but not sending them—is linked to increases in bridging social capital

	1. Base model		2. FB activity		3. Communication skill		4. Self-esteem	
	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)
Intercept	3.86 ***	(0.03)	3.86 ***	(0.03)	3.85 ***	(0.03)	3.86 ***	(0.03)
Bridging social capital (lagged)	0.47 ***	(0.04)	0.45 ***	(0.04)	0.41 ***	(0.04)	0.41 ***	(0.04)
Age	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Male	-0.17 ***	(0.05)	-0.17 **	(0.05)	-0.14 **	(0.05)	-0.16 **	(0.05)
Major life changes								
Moved	0.14	(0.09)	0.14	(0.09)	0.12	(0.08)	0.13	(0.09)
Lost job	-0.34 **	(0.11)	-0.32 **	(0.11)	-0.25 *	(0.11)	-0.30 **	(0.11)
Time on Facebook	0.05 .	(0.03)	-0.05	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.04)
Facebook activities								
Directed communication (in)			0.14 **	(0.05)	0.12 **	(0.05)	0.13 **	(0.05)
Passive consumption			0.05	(0.04)	0.04	(0.04)	0.04	(0.04)
Broadcasting			-0.02	(0.06)	0.01	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)
Individual differences								
Communication skill					0.08 **	(0.03)		
‡Communication skill X Directed communication					-0.07 *	(0.03)		
‡Communication skill X Consumption					-0.07 *	(0.03)		
‡Communication skill X Broadcasting					0.00	(0.04)		
Self-esteem							0.06 *	(0.03)
‡Self-esteem X Directed communication							-0.07 **	(0.03)
‡Self-esteem X Consumption							-0.04 .	(0.02)
‡Self-esteem X Broadcasting							-0.01	(0.03)
			Adj. R ² = 0.30		R ² = 0.32		R ² = 0.34	

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ · $p < .10$ N=415

Predicting bridging social capital

The first paper utilizes college students as participants. How could this attribute have affected the findings? E.g., there's a strong case of college students wanting to maintain social capital with friends from high school. But how does this generalize to other settings?

The papers we studied today focus on the role of Facebook in social capital. Do the findings extend to other platforms as well? Give examples of bonding/bridging social capital on a social media, an online forum, and an anonymous / ephemeral site.

Ellison et al. find that college students' intensity of Facebook use was more predictive of bridging social capital versus bonding (46% vs. 22% explanation of variance in the data).

How does it contrast to the popular perception that FB is for maintaining old ties?

Ellison et al. find that college students' intensity of Facebook use was more predictive of bridging social capital versus bonding (46% vs. 22% explanation of variance in the data).

How would it generalize to the FB of today?

Ellison et al. also found that Facebook usage was found to interact with measures of psychological well-being. How do you think Facebook use makes people feel better?

Can design impact how people derive benefits from social capital?

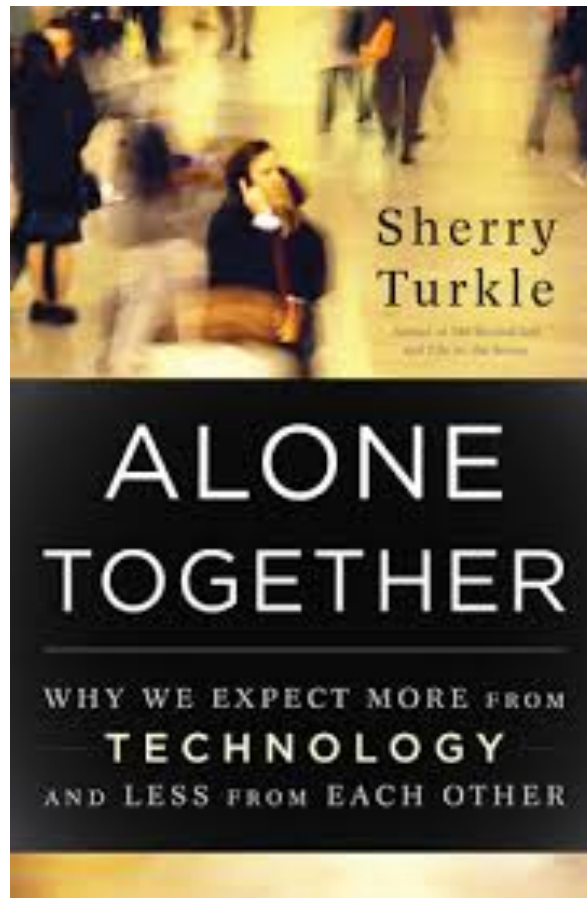
E.g., curation of items on the News Feed

Watts et al.: human networks have structure and agency. One aspect that hasn't been explored is how our "agency" impacts creation, maintenance, bridging social capital. What could such agency be and how can it impact perceived social capital?

Is greater access to social capital *always*
a good thing?

The papers do not examine the content shared on SNSes in trying to measure social capital. What additional insights can content lend?

Continuing on content, many SNSes and social media support rich multimedia sharing. How can different types of media impact bridging/bonding social capital or someone's self-esteem?



“Drawn by the illusion of companionship without the demands of intimacy, we confuse postings and online sharing with authentic communication. We are drawn to sacrifice conversation for mere connection.” – Sherry Turkle