Part I.

The Social Dimension of Information Technology

Chapter I

Virtual Communities and Social Capital[1]

Anita Blanchard and Tom Horan

Claremont Graduate University, USA

Robert Putnam (1993) has developed a theory of social capital to explain the effect of decreasing community participation and civic engagement on declining institutional performance. Subsequently, there has been much speculation as to whether emerging virtual communities can counteract this trend. We apply the findings of computer-mediated communication and virtual communities to the networks, norms, and trust of social capital and also examine the possible effects of virtual communities on the privatization of leisure time. We conclude that social capital and civic engagement will increase when virtual communities develop around physically based communities and when these virtual communities foster additional communities of interest. Through a preliminary analysis, we identified potential communities of interest including education, exchange of general community information, and opportunities for government and political participation. We conclude with a discussion of current trends and research needs.

The lack of citizen participation in the community has recently come under scrutiny. Although this trend may have started at least a century ago (Wellman and Gulia 1999), it is only lately that the implications of this decline in community participation have been more fully explored. Besides negatively affecting a person's affiliation with his or her own neighborhood, this lack of community has also been cited as a major reason for the decline in civic involvement which helps communities operate (Putnam, 1993). Putnam has developed a theory of social capital that attempts to explain the relationship between citizen engagement in the community and the performance of the government and other social institutions. Although Putnam's theory is by no means unchallenged (Greeley, 1996), it has

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/virtual-communities-social-capital/29107

Related Content

DeLone & McLean IS Success Model in Evaluating Knowledge Transfer in a Virtual Learning Environment

Raija Halonen, Heli Thomanderand Elisa Laukkanen (2012). *Societal Impacts on Information Systems Development and Applications (pp. 100-113).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/delone-mclean-success-model-evaluating/65005

Factors Impacting the Success of Electronic Government: A Micro Level and a Back Office View

Helaiel Almutairi (2012). *Societal Impacts on Information Systems Development and Applications (pp. 83-99).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/factors-impacting-success-electronic-government/65004

Availability Estimation of Demand Buses as Human Transportation System, Using Self-Organizing Map

Toyohide Watanabeand Kentaro Uesugi (2013). *Governance, Communication, and Innovation in a Knowledge Intensive Society (pp. 51-63).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/availability-estimation-demand-buses-human/76594

A Study on the Impact of Faculty QWL on Quality of Education in Academic Institutions

Chandra Sekhar Patro (2015). *International Journal of Knowledge Society Research (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-study-on-the-impact-of-faculty-qwl-on-quality-of-education-in-academic-institutions/133137

Adwiki: Socio-Technical Design for Mananging Advising Knowledge in a Higher Education Context

Aditya Johri, Monique Dufour, Jenny Loand Daniel Shanahan (2013). *International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development (pp. 37-59).*
www.irma-international.org/article/adwiki-socio-technical-design-mananging/80416