
SOCIETY

Schools and 'Social Capital'

"The Creation and Destruction of Social Capital: Implications for the Law" by James S. Coleman, in *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, & Public Policy* (No. 3, 1988), Notre Dame Law School, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

Two years ago, in a controversial study comparing 1,015 public and private high schools, Coleman, a University of Chicago sociologist, found that private schools, particularly Catholic schools, frequently outperformed public schools.

Less widely noted at the time were differences among the private schools. The "independent" private schools Coleman studied had one thing in common with the public schools: high dropout rates (close to 15 percent). By contrast, Catholic high schools had only four percent dropout rates. (Likewise, other religious schools had very few dropouts.) The rates for Catholic schools were virtually the same whether the students themselves were Catholics or not.

Why should this be so?

Coleman believes that the explanation lies in something he calls "social capital." Financial and physical capital are familiar concepts. During the last 30 years, economists have recognized the importance of "human capital"—skills and education. Social capital, says Coleman, "exists in the *relations* between persons."

The chief source of social capital (e.g., trust, shared values and standards) is the family: the bonds among and between parents and children. But the "community surrounding the school" is also a source of social capital. Sometimes, it seems to pro-

vide enough to compensate for weak families: Catholic school students from one-parent families, unlike their public school counterparts, have the same (low) dropout rate as their classmates from two-parent families.

Until recently, Coleman believes, public schools were backed by enough community "social capital" to function well. But non-working mothers were the backbone of these communities; now that many have taken jobs, the communities (and families) have weakened. Indeed, says Coleman, the United States has been depleting its "social capital" for two centuries, ever since men began leaving their farms for jobs away from home.

Families and communities have no monopoly on the production of "social capital," according to Coleman, nor are the schools the only institutions where it matters. "Social capital" is vital to the functioning of business, for example, especially in Japan.

What can be done to replenish America's "social capital?" Schools can actively organize parent "communities"; corporations can grant parental leaves and take other measures to strengthen families. But it may be, Coleman says, that other institutions—perhaps the large corporation—will have to perform some of the functions that families once did.

Crime and Community

"Making Neighborhoods Safe" by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Feb. 1989), 8 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. 02166.

Most urban crime-fighting is "incident-oriented": a citizen reports a burglary; the police arrive as quickly as possible, record the relevant information, and try to track down the burglar.

Police chiefs in many cities now realize that this traditional strategy is insufficient, according to Wilson, a UCLA professor and noted specialist on crime, and Kelling, a Northeastern University criminologist.

Simply responding to "incidents" usually means that underlying neighborhood *problems* (drugs, gangs) go unaddressed and "incidents" continue and even multiply.

A new strategy, buttressed by much recent experience, is "community-oriented policing." At its best, it involves police working with other city agencies and the residents of a targeted neighborhood to establish public order and safety. Some proven remedies: cleaning up alleys, fixing broken windows, improving lighting, tearing down abandoned buildings (havens for drug users), repeatedly sweeping drug-infested areas, and deploying foot patrols. The results are more than cosmetic: "Law-abiding citizens who are afraid to go out onto streets filled with graffiti, winos, and loitering youths yield control of these

streets to people who are not afraid."

Focusing on one neighborhood does not simply push criminals into adjoining territory, say the authors. Most crime in most neighborhoods is local: offenders live near their victims, and many crimes are opportunistic. In parts of Houston, New York, Los Angeles, and other cities, the new police strategies have succeeded.

However, Wilson and Kelling note, much remains unknown. Neighborhood Watch programs, for example, still need assessment. So do the costs and benefits of having police officers help bring in help from other city agencies—not normal "police business." And, they add, "no way of [permanently] wresting control of a neighborhood from a street gang has yet been proved effective."

Civil Rights During the 1940s

"Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement" by Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1988), 112 N. Bryan St., Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Most histories of the U.S. civil rights movement begin with the Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. In fact, say Korstad and Lichtenstein, historians at the University of North Carolina and Catholic University, respectively, the effort began "dramatically and decisively" a decade earlier.

During the early 1940s, two million blacks left Southern farms to seek wartime jobs in the industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest; another million moved to Southern cities. Fostered partly by Washington's egalitarian wartime rhetoric, black political awareness grew. Membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) soared from 50,000 in 1940 to 450,000 in 1946. Even in the Old South, black voter registration quadrupled.

But the chief source of the new black activism was the growing labor union movement. Half a million blacks joined industrial unions during the 1940s. Franklin Roosevelt's support and "the 'industrial citizenship' that union contracts offered

once-marginal elements of the working class" generated rising expectations and a new set of goals to aim for. At Ford's famous River Rouge plant, most of the 9,000 black workers became solid supporters of the United Auto Workers (UAW) after 1941. They began to demand equal treatment on the shop floor. Some black unionists moved into the UAW hierarchy; others swelled the ranks of the Michigan NAACP. The UAW's top leaders backed "mass rallies, picket lines, and big lobbying delegations to city hall, Lansing, and Washington" seeking protections against job discrimination. Even the staid NAACP joined demonstrations for fair housing.

By 1950, 10 states had created fair employment practice commissions; four major cities (e.g. Chicago, Philadelphia) had enacted tough laws against job bias; and the Americans for Democratic Action gained a strong civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Party platform.

Then the movement sputtered.

What happened? Automation and post-World War II cutbacks eliminated many