GROUPS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, and CIVIL SOCIETY
LECTURE

Resummarize stratification --

Do stratification and indicators (class and status) exist?

Marxist/Conflict view that stratification through class was present, essential, unavoidable and based solely on economics which lead to the class system. (Tumin recognized the disjunction necessary to maintain an elite structure; hoped it might be avoided)

Weber/Functionalist view was that stratification might be present but is much more dependent on social function and status and the conflict inherent in Marx' class theory might be avoided. Strongly dependent on institutions and bureaucracy (Davis felt stratification was useful to society and serves a purpose)

Link between stratification and groups --

What are groups?

Do groups emerge from stratification?

Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1830s)

"Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types -- religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large, and very
minute …. Nothing in my view deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America."

Current research shows, at some level --

Link between quality of public life and the performance of social institutions

Education, urban poverty, unemployment, control of crime and drug abuse, health all linked to civic engagement.

Norms and networks required for civic engagement.

U.S. plays central role in systematic studies of the links between democracy and civil society.

THINGS WE LOOK AT IN RESEARCH:

- Clubs
- Teams
- Fraternities and Sororities
- Religious Groups
  - Churches
  - Cults
- Special Interest
- AARP

All of above build (maybe):

SOCIAL CAPITAL: FEATURES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION SUCH AS NETWORKS, NORMS AND SOCIAL TRUST THAT FACILITATE COORDINATION AND
COOPERATION FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT

What is really happening?

Polls and stats:

1966 - 1992 "trust the government in Washington" almost never or only some of the time risen from 30% to 75%

People *claiming* to attend church down from 48% to 41%

Labor union membership dropping from 32.4% in 1953 to 15.8% in 1992

PTA membership dropping from 12 mil in 1964 to 5 mil in 1982

Fraternal membership is down

- Women's Clubs down 59% since 1964
- League of Women Voters down 42% since 1969
- Boy Scouts down 26% since 1970
- Red Cross down 61% since 1970
- Lions 12% / 1983
- Elks 18% / 1979
- Shriners 27% / 1979
- Jaycees 44% / 1979
- Masons 39% / 1959

Last 25 years all membership has declined approx 25%

What is emerging? Tertiary organizations:

- Sierra Club
- Car Clubs
AARP
Soccer moms

Individual commitment to organizations and activities that provide personal reward and benefit, or reward and benefit to specific causes, with little relationship building contact among members.

No opportunity for the sense of self to move from "I" to "we."

What has happened?

Government - distrust based on assassinations, Watergate, Vietnam, Congressional inaction, personal scandals

Church - more churches per capita than anywhere but a move from institutions to more self-defined

Unions - benefits of membership hard to define as New Deal fades

Why?

Women moving to labor force? Really - labor hours vs organization hours? What about decline in men's involvement?

Mobility? Despite perception, stability on rise and higher than in the 1950s

Technology? No time for collective interests and individual interests are pursued?

Regardless of what has happened, or why, or what can be done, the following seems clear
1) Physical proximity is likely to lead to group solidarity

2) The more people interact the more they will like each other (?

3) Groups seen as high in status are more cohesive

4) Best atmosphere for increasing group cohesiveness is one that is relaxed and cooperative

Social cohesion is a factor in policy consensus because it creates a desire on the part of group members to reconcile differences with other members of the group. Spread the groups, increase membership, encourage over-lap, etc.