

From Membership to Management in American Civic Life: The Julian Rothbaum

In his book *The Transformation of American Civic Life*, Julian Rothbaum argues that American civic life has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades. This transformation has been marked by a shift from a focus on participation to a focus on efficiency, and from a commitment to democratic values to a commitment to professional norms. This shift has had a profound impact on the way that civic organizations operate, and on the way that citizens participate in them.



Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life (The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series Book 8)

by Theda Skocpol

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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The Decline of Membership

One of the most striking trends in American civic life in recent decades has been the decline of membership in civic organizations. In 1960, nearly two-thirds of Americans belonged to at least one civic organization. By 2010, that number had fallen to just over one-third. This decline has been particularly pronounced among young people. In 1960, over half of Americans under the age of 30 belonged to a civic organization. By 2010, that number had fallen to just over one-quarter.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to the decline of membership in civic organizations. One factor is the increasing number of demands on people's time. With both spouses working in most families, and with children involved in a variety of activities, there is less time available for volunteering. Another factor is the changing nature of work. In the past, many people worked in jobs that provided opportunities for social interaction. Today, more people work in jobs that are isolated and solitary.

The Rise of Management

As membership in civic organizations has declined, the role of management has increased. In the past, civic organizations were typically run by volunteers. Today, they are increasingly run by professional managers. These managers are often paid salaries and benefits, and they have a different set of priorities than volunteers. They are more focused on efficiency and accountability, and they are less committed to democratic values.

The rise of management has had a number of consequences for civic life. One consequence is that civic organizations have become more bureaucratic. They are more likely to have written rules and procedures, and they are more likely to be hierarchical. Another consequence is that

civic organizations have become more focused on fundraising. They need to raise money to pay for their professional staff and their programs.

The Impact on Citizens

The decline of membership and the rise of management have had a profound impact on the way that citizens participate in civic life. In the past, citizens were more likely to be involved in civic organizations as volunteers. Today, they are more likely to be involved as consumers. They are more likely to pay for services that were once provided by volunteers, and they are less likely to volunteer their own time.

The decline of civic participation has a number of negative consequences for society. It makes it more difficult for people to come together to solve common problems. It makes it more difficult for people to make their voices heard in government. And it makes it more difficult for people to feel connected to their communities.

The transformation of American civic life is a complex and ongoing process. It is a process that has been shaped by a number of factors, including the decline of membership, the rise of management, and the changing nature of work. This process has had a profound impact on the way that civic organizations operate, and on the way that citizens participate in them. It is a process that is likely to continue in the years to come.

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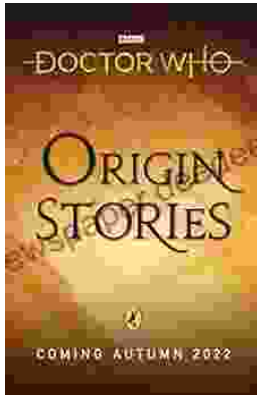
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