



2008

Racial Diversity and Social Capital: Equality and Community in America. Rodney E. Hero.

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Recommended Citation

Yi, Jaehee (2008) "*Racial Diversity and Social Capital: Equality and Community in America.* Rodney E. Hero," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 4 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol35/iss4/18>

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policy proposals reflect different ideological tendencies. The book is a helpful resource and should be widely prescribed.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Rodney E. Hero, *Racial Diversity and Social Capital: Equality and Community in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. \$58.00 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback.

Where do I belong? This is a question that many human beings have asked themselves as they form their social networks and adjust their lifestyles to community living. This question underlies many attempts to explain social phenomena and particularly the relationship of the individual to the wider community. The question has been answered with reference to two conceptual frameworks—social capital and racial diversity. Social capital has become an important way of looking at society's general well-being and also as a way of explaining developments in American politics. Diversity is also emphasized in current social science scholarship but uses a very different approach to analyze social relationships. The question for social scientists is which of the two offers greater insights and explanatory power.

Hero's book examines this issue in some depth, asking whether the social capital thesis or the racial diversity thesis consistently explains social and political outcomes in the United States. The author also asks how notions of race and community interact with each other to affect social outcomes and political participation. Although many social scientists have explained the dramatic decline of social capital from the mid 1960s in relation to decreasing political participation, the book introduces racial diversity to this explanatory framework and offers helpful insights.

The book begins with an extensive summary of the argument, evidence and conclusions on the social capital and racial diversity theses. These issues are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, while Chapter 4 examines social outcomes such as minority school graduation rates and minority infant mortality rates across different states. The author contends that the outcomes for minorities in high social capital states are no better

than those in other settings. Chapter 5 analyzes the impact of racial diversity and social capital on aggregate voter turnout in American elections. Interactive effects between the two on voter participation are tested and explained. Chapter 6 explores whether American states with higher social capital are more likely to adopt basic public policies that advance social conditions bolstering essential values of equality, and what the role of racial diversity is in this question. Chapter 7 synthesizes the main findings of the book and concludes that racial diversity has a greater impact than social capital on political outcomes.

In examining the relationship between social capital and racial diversity, the author finds that the effects of social capital on social and political outcomes are “an artifact of racial diversity.” Unlike other studies that examine racial composition as a secondary control variable, he analyzes racial diversity as a main independent variable and finds that the social capital perspective provides only “a partial picture” of American politics. Although the major portion of the book is dedicated to statistical analyses, questions such as the insufficiency of statistical power due to the small sample size and unclear definitions of variables in the analyses need to be taken into account. In addition, some scholars would use multivariate analyses simultaneously to analyze different outcomes, as the outcomes may correlate with each other, thus leading to different analytical results. Despite the caveats, Hero’s examination of the “two underpinnings of the U.S.”—race and community—is to be applauded for taking a pioneering step to flesh out racial effects on social and political outcomes.

Where do I belong? When Americans try to answer this question, some will look in the mirror and see their color of skin first. Others may not! Although Hero is a pioneer, the issue of understanding inequality from a racial perspective and how it is related to peoples’ sense of community and belonging needs to be further studied. Although this is an advanced book, it will be a useful resource for graduate students in political science and political sociology, as well as social welfare researchers, policymakers and practitioners working to achieve social, economic, and political equality in the United States.

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