

From Membership to Management: A Journey into American Civic Life

By Julian Rothbaum

In his book *From Membership to Management: The Rise of Professional Leadership in American Civic Life*, Julian Rothbaum traces the changing nature of civic engagement in America over the past century.



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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Drawing on a wealth of historical research, Rothbaum argues that the traditional model of civic engagement based on membership organizations has declined in recent decades. In its place, a new model of civic engagement has emerged, one that is characterized by professional management and a focus on service delivery.

Rothbaum's book is a valuable contribution to the study of civic engagement. It provides a nuanced and comprehensive account of the changes that have taken place in this important area of American life.

The Decline of Membership Organizations

One of the most significant changes in civic engagement in recent decades has been the decline of membership organizations. In the early 20th century, membership organizations were a vital part of American life. They provided a sense of community and belonging, and they played an important role in shaping public policy.

However, the number of membership organizations has declined significantly in recent decades. This decline has been attributed to a number of factors, including the rise of television and the internet, the increasing mobility of Americans, and the changing nature of work.

As membership organizations have declined, so too has their influence on public policy. In the past, membership organizations were able to exert significant influence on public policy through their lobbying efforts. However, the decline in membership organizations has made it more difficult for them to mobilize their members and advocate for their interests.

The Rise of Professional Management

As membership organizations have declined, a new model of civic engagement has emerged, one that is characterized by professional management and a focus on service delivery.

Professional managers are typically hired by nonprofit organizations to run their day-to-day operations. They are responsible for fundraising, program

development, and staff management. Professional managers have a different set of skills and priorities than volunteers. They are more focused on efficiency and effectiveness, and they are less likely to be motivated by a sense of community or a desire to make a difference.

The rise of professional management has had a number of consequences for civic engagement. First, it has led to a decline in the number of volunteers. Volunteers are less likely to work with organizations that are run by professional managers. They prefer to work with organizations that are more volunteer-led and that have a more grassroots feel.

Second, the rise of professional management has led to a shift in the focus of civic engagement. Organizations that are run by professional managers are more likely to focus on service delivery than on advocacy. They are more interested in providing services to their clients than in changing public policy.

The rise of professional management is a significant change in the landscape of civic engagement. It remains to be seen what the long-term consequences of this change will be.

The Future of Civic Engagement

The future of civic engagement is uncertain. The decline of membership organizations and the rise of professional management have led to a number of challenges for civic engagement. However, there are also a number of opportunities for civic engagement to adapt and thrive.

One opportunity for civic engagement is to focus on new forms of participation. Social media and the internet have created new ways for

people to engage with their communities and with public policy. Civic organizations can use these new tools to reach out to new audiences and to engage them in civic life.

Another opportunity for civic engagement is to focus on building relationships between different sectors of society. Civic organizations can work with businesses, government, and other nonprofits to address complex social problems. By working together, these different sectors can achieve more than they could on their own.

The future of civic engagement is uncertain, but it is also full of possibilities. Civic organizations can adapt and thrive by focusing on new forms of participation and by building relationships between different sectors of society.



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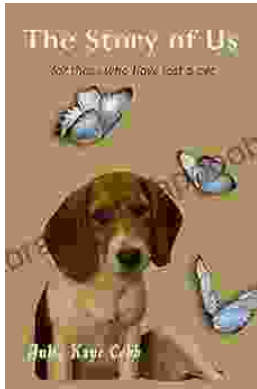
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