A NATION OF CIVIC FREELANCERS: THE UNEVEN SCHOLARSHIP OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

by
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ABSTRACT

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Scholars in several disciplines are now engaged in a spirited debate about citizen participation in the United States. They disagree about trends, and they disagree about the causes of those trends. This thesis steps back from that debate and analyzes how scholars are approaching the scholarship of civic engagement. Inconsistency in the conceptualization of critical terms such as social capital, civil society, and civic engagement has led to varied and inconsistent research findings. Scholars bring many assumptions to their research and employ dozens of variables in search of answers about why participation matters, but there is no consensus yet on what set of variables is correlated with democratization. A comprehensive model or index is needed. A benchmark survey of civic engagement in Illinois provides a more comprehensive approach to the scholarship of civic engagement; a typology of Illinois civic engagers suggests a model for analysis. The Illinois study and a separate national AARP study show that Illinoisans and Americans are indeed engaged in their communities, but their levels and kinds of engagement vary considerably – so much so that you might say we have become a nation of civic freelancers. An emerging paradigm shift might explain some of the inconsistency in the current research on civic engagement.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION:
THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DEBATE AND THE SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This is a study about U.S. citizens' participation in their communities. More precisely, it is a study about the status of the scholarship of civic engagement in the United States.

The study is important for three reasons. First, generally accepted political theory says that citizens' participation in their communities is correlated with the strength and health of democratic institutions. Political scientists expound that theory in international studies, in cross-national studies, and in studies of the United States. That theory, grounded in observation and study of citizens in their communities, makes it important to study precisely how and why citizens are involved in their communities, and why that matters.

Second, this is an important topic because American leaders, citizens, journalists, and academics are now debating, sometimes vitriolically, whether civic engagement is on the decline in the United States. They are also asking how to get more students and adults involved in community projects and organizations. Igniting the debate in 1995 was Robert D. Putnam (1995), a Harvard professor of public policy who wrote an article, "Bowling Alone," for the *Journal of Democracy*. That article was cited at least 336 times in the literature by the fall of

2000, the *Social Sciences Citation Index* indicated. Five years after publishing the article, Putnam advanced his arguments in a book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Putnam 2000a). He claimed that in almost every measurable way except in the general area of volunteerism, Americans are participating less not only in organizations and organized activities, but also in informal ways such as playing cards with friends and going on family picnics. His more general conclusion is that "social capital" – which he describes as the norms and networks that bond people within organizations and in communities – is on the decline because Americans are less connected than they used to be, and that kind of disengagement and disconnection could spell trouble for American society and the American form of democracy. Not everyone agrees with Putnam's fnding that participation is on the decline or his conclusion that social capital is being depleted, as I will explain later.

Besides Putnam, other academics and several national organizations, foundations, and scholarly journals have shown considerable interest recently in the study or promotion of civic engagement. The American Political Science Association (apsanet 2001) has a Web site listing 65 projects and organizations "that are actively engaging and fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life." The National Civic League (2001), the Pew Charitable Trusts (2001), and the Kettering Foundation (2001) are among those giving a lot of resources to civic engagement projects, especially at the local level. Many books and reports (Dionne 1998, National Commission on Civic Renewal 1998, Fullinwinder 1999, Skocpol and Fiorina 1999, Putnam 2000a, Sirianni and Friedland 2001a, Foley and Edwards 2001) have compiled scholars' analyses of civil society or calls for a renewal of civic America. Sirianni and Friedland identified 467 "innovative civic practitioners" and then called for a National Civic Congress. In addition to more than a thousand individual journal articles, several journals have devoted entire issues or significant portions of issues to the topic of civic engagement,

social capital, and related topics. They include the *American Behavioral Scientist* (September 1998), *Political Communication* (November-December 2000), *Political Psychology* (September 1998), and *PS: Political Science and Politics* (September 2000). A glance at those journals and the articles shows that the study of civic engagement is multi-disciplinary, bringing in the fields of history, sociology, psychology, communications, economics, anthropology, and political science, as well as multi-disciplinary fields such as political sociology and social psychology.

This thesis examines how scholars study the levels and forms of civic engagement. It is interesting to look at how the scholars interpret their findings and do quantitative analysis, because scholars and others have looked at the same data and arrived at different conclusions (e.g., Putnam 1995, Ladd 1996, Samuelson 1996). My primary interest is in how scholars study civic engagement, how they define it, and how they measure it. I am also interested in their findings and conclusions – not to draw conclusions about who is right, but insofar as their findings and conclusions help us understand how they study civic engagement and develop theories that are helpful in understanding citizen participation.

Besides the political theory and the current academic and practitioners' interest, the third reason my study of civic engagement is important is that the explosion in interest has resulted in the sloppy use of terms and inconsistently operationalized definitions. Different terms and phrases have emerged that all have something to do with citizen participation in their communities. Among those terms are civic engagement, citizen engagement, volunteerism, social capital, participatory democracy, civic culture, and civil society. Those terms are not synonymous, but writers and scholars sometimes seemingly substitute one term for the other. That has led to confusing scholarship, because scholars use different words and phrases to describe similar concepts or behaviors. Without consistent definitions, it becomes unclear

exactly why scholars use different terms. For example, a Putnam-led national benchmark survey is titled "Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey" (Saguaro Seminar 2001a, 2001b), but a press release about the results of that survey begins, "Largest-ever Survey on Americans' Civic Engagement. …" Nowhere do the words "social capital" appear in that press release's headline. So are social capital and civic engagement identical concepts? No, but from the Saguaro Project's survey and press release, a careful reader is confused from the very beginning about definitions.

Greater clarity is needed as scholars advance the discussion about civic engagement. So this thesis concerns itself with how scholars study citizens' participation in their communities. It focuses, for reasons explained in the next chapter, on the broad term "civic engagement," defined in Chapter 3 as "the specific organized and informal activities through which individuals get drawn into community and political affairs." That term comes closer than "civil society" or "social capital" to actually describing individual citizens' participation. But because other scholars use related terms as such civic culture, civil society, and social capital to discuss, measure, and define citizen participation, I must also examine their work in my analysis of the scholarship of civic engagement.

The scope of this thesis

One of the biggest challenges of this thesis is narrowing the scope. My focus is on the scholarship of civic engagement. That is a special challenge because much of the current interest in and discussion about civic engagement goes beyond what is being studied or measured to a trend, a counterargument, a conclusion, or a call to action. For example, Putnam (2000a) gets attention for his conclusion about a trend that suggests civic engagement is on the decline. The Pew-funded projects and organizations such as Campus Compact (2001) get attention for their calls to action; that is, for their efforts to stimulate more citizen action in

communities and on college campuses, respectively. A significant discussion also emanates, as I have already explained, from the rich scholarly discussion about whether Putnam is right or wrong in his conclusion that American communities are on the decline. In this thesis, I do not suggest what leaders or individuals can do to enhance or stimulate civic engagement in their communities. But I do examine the findings and conclusions of the research, because they provide valuable insights into what the researchers were studying, what research questions they asked, what they measured or studied, and why. From their studies and findings, I am able make inferences about their operational definitions of civic engagement. In that way, I am able to maintain my focus on how scholars study civic engagement today.

Methodology: Development of the topic

Chapter 2 contains my research questions and my two hypotheses. Chapter 3 provides a brief historical analysis of the concept of civic engagement in the United States. Chapter 3 also identifies several theories that have emerged about the importance of civic engagement to citizens' political activity, and it ends with my operational definitions of civic engagement, social capital, and civil society.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the body of literature and three major survey research instruments that, together, provide a solid overview of the current scholarship. Chapter 4 is a literature review that makes it clear that scholars have struggled for consistency in their use of terms and concepts related to citizen participation. I developed three tables in Chapter 5 to analyze in a new way how scholars study civic engagement. With the help of those tables, I look at what scholars have studied and how they have measured and defined civic engagement.

Scholars disagree about what should be studied and how civic engagement should be measured. They also take different approaches. Some do survey research; others do historical studies. Still others do a combination of survey research and psychosocial history in their

analysis, and still others prefer ethnography. Most now see civic engagement as a multidisciplinary topic. In Chapter 4, I move beyond what the scholars studied and measured to what conclusions they drew and what they found. That step is essential in making inferences about the theoretical models being used today, and how those model compare to the classic work of scholars such as Tocqueville (2000 [1835, 1840]) and Almond and Verba (1963).

With this thesis, one of my contributions to the scholarship is to distinguish clearly the study of citizen *activities* from the study of citizen *attitudes and opinions*. Many surveys on civic engagement include questions about what citizens do (e.g., do they volunteer?) *and* what they think or believe (do they trust their government or other people in their community?), because scholars believe citizens' community activities *and* attitudes have an impact on citizens' political activity. Since my focus is on the study of civic engagement, I find it worthwhile to separate the variables of *activities* from *attitudes* as a way of sorting out what the scholars are analyzing.

Then, in Chapter 6, after identifying inconsistencies and gaps in the current scholarship, I use an Illinois case study (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001) to illustrate a way of studying civic engagement at the state level. I was a participant-observer in that study by serving as the director of the Illinois Civic Engagement Project, which started its work in earnest in the spring of 2000 and concluded with a conference in Chicago in March 2001. The report we produced, "Profile of Illinois: An Engaged State," included a lengthy analysis of our benchmark survey on Illinois civic engagement. It also contributed to the scholarship by developing a typology of citizens categorized by common forms of involvement. Developing our survey instrument and later the drafts of the typology, with my feedback, were Richard Schuldt and Barbara Ferrara, two colleagues at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Schuldt's Survey Research Office conducted the statewide survey and analyzed the results, and Lipman-Hearne, Inc., of Chicago

conducted focus groups that added qualitative data to our research. Our report included the survey results as well as 68 recommendations for enhancing civic engagement in Illinois. The recommendations were the work of a steering committee that met several times in Chicago at meetings that I chaired. I suggest in this thesis that our research and report provides a model for improved consistency in future studies of civic engagement. But as Verba (1980) acknowledged about the classic work *The Civic Culture*, I also acknowledge that the Illinois study, as a benchmark study, is one that is meant to be superseded. Although our project report provided a call for action – a necessity when working with the general public – I want to emphasize that this thesis will not begin to answer either major question about Putnam's work (Putnam 2000b and 2001): first, whether he is right about a decline in social capital, and second, what can be done to stimulate citizen participation in our communities. Those are questions for other studies and projects.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I test my two hypotheses and suggest that a paradigm shift in social structures may be partially responsible for the fuzzy scholarship on civic engagement. I also construct a diagram (Figure 7.1) that identifies many of the variables that need to mapped and tested in a comprehensive model of civic engagement.

This thesis meets the rigorous challenge of maintaining its focus on how scholars are studying civic engagement today. Then it offers some direction for future studies of civic engagement in the United States.

Chapter 2

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Clearly, scholars do not agree about the current level of Americans' civic engagement. Some say it is on the decline, while others say the types of civic engagement are changing and therefore, the overall level of civic engagement is increasing. As I will address more fully in the next chapter, scholars also use terms such as civic engagement, civil society, and social capital rather freely, and the terms are used so commonly that they lack clear definitions. This thesis enters that foggy picture to analyze and clarify what scholars are actually studying. That leads me to many questions.

The major questions in this thesis are: What is the status of the study of civic engagement today? Is civic engagement important to democratic institutions? What does "civic engagement" mean? Is there consensus among scholars? What are the differences of opinion or perspective? How do they measure civic engagement? Does civic engagement include citizens' activities or attitudes, or only activities? How can it be possible that *a definition* of civic engagement includes only activities, but *the study* of civic engagement also requires a study of

citizens' attitudes? How do scholars assumptions and definitions affect what they study, find, and conclude?

Other questions that are important to this thesis are: Should attitudes such as "social trust" be a part of the civic engagement measurement? What research questions remain that will help scholars move toward consensus on the concept of civic engagement?

With those questions in mind, I pose two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Inconsistent definitions and inconsistent conceptualization and subsequent model construction lead to conflicting conclusions in recent research on civic engagement. Clearer definitions and a more comprehensive, integrated conceptualization of civic engagement are needed to guide future research.*

Hypothesis 2: *The case study report, "Profile of Illinois: An Engaged State," illustrates the benefit of a broad conceptualization of civic engagement.*

Chapter 3

FROM TOCQUEVILLE TO PUTNAM TO THE INTERNET: BACKGROUND AND GENERAL THEORY REGARDING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Putnam (1995, 2000a) has both advanced and confused the current academic and popular discussion about civic engagement. He has advanced it by popularizing and reinvigorating the discussion. But he has confused it because many scholars and journalists focus on or take issue with his basic finding *or* his basic conclusion: the *finding* that social capital is on the decline or the *conclusion* that American communities are on the decline. It gets confusing when scholars and writers disagree with his premise but agree with his conclusion, or vice versa. For example, some agree that that communities are on the decline without agreeing that social capital is on the decline. The problem is that Putnam's finding and conclusion are now linked in much of the public debate, even as he reiterates the long-held theory that civic participation enhances democracies. This thesis disconnects Putnam's research finding about social capital being on the decline from his conclusion about communities being on the decline. It focuses instead on the classic theory that makes his finding important in the first place – the theory that participation is related to the health of

democracies – and it focuses on how scholars have studied citizen participation. That distinction is critical, because without such a careful, disciplined analysis of what is being studied, it would be too easy to leap without foundation to Putnam's inflammatory conclusion about communities being on the decline – a finding that many scholars and practitioners want to debate and address. This chapter focuses on the major advances in theory about citizen participation.

Theory about citizen participation and political participation

Political theory suggests that citizens' participation in their communities is highly correlated with citizens' political activity (Verba and Nie 1972, Cohen and Arato 1992, Tocqueville 2000, Putnam 1993, 2000a). A corollary is that more community participation leads to more political participation by the citizenry (see Figure 3.1). A related theory is that

Figure 3.1: General political theory about relationship between citizens' participation in their communities and political participation

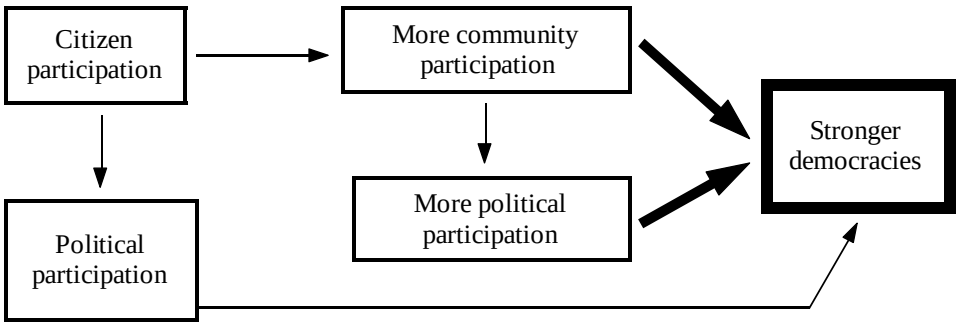


Illustration by Ed Wojcicki

greater participation by citizens in their communities leads to stronger democracies (Almond and Verba 1963, Putnam 1993). So it becomes critical to find out how citizens participate and how scholars define and measure that participation. The challenge, however, is to study and

define “participation” in a consistent way. It remains a challenge because scholars have been unable to find that consistency theoretically or conceptually. I address various operational definitions of “participation” more fully in the next chapter, whereas in this chapter I focus on the general theory that links participation to democratic institutions.

The challenge of definitions and terms: A brief history of civil society, social capital, and civic engagement

Scholars have had difficulty defining what they mean in various approaches to studying citizen participation. They do not use the same terms in the same way, and sometimes they use different terms to describe the same general concept of citizen participation. Scholars regularly use three terms in their studies of community participation: (1) civil society, (2) social capital, and/or (3) civic engagement. There are also variations on those terms, including “civil life” (Tocqueville, 2000 [1835, 1840]) and “civic culture” (Almond and Verba 1963). The term used most frequently, at least in recent years, is civil society (see Table 3.1). A search of citations for the three different terms consistently shows that scholars use the term “civil society” more often than they use “social capital” or “civic engagement.”

Table 3.1: Number of library citations for three concepts in two databases

Concept searched	Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts, 1984-June 2001	PAIS International abstracts, 1972-May 2001
“civil society”	1,135	368
“social capital”	493	47
“civic engagement”	58	11

Source: OVID online database, Brookens Library, UIS; July 15, 2001

Despite such frequent use of the term civil society, "Much of the discussion [about it], both scholarly and among political and civic elites, suffers from a lack of clarity about just how to think about civil society," Foley and Edwards (1997) wrote. "Definitional questions, indeed, have plagued the civil society notion from its birth" (Foley and Edwards 1998). Saying the same thing about confusion with the concept of civil society, Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato (1992, 83) wrote in their theoretical analysis, "Present-day political models that use the concept of civil society not only contradict one another but are also relatively poor in categories." To add clarity to the confusion, therefore, I will briefly trace the conceptual history of the study of civil society, social capital, and civic engagement in the United States.

The best starting point for this discussion is with Alexis de Tocqueville (2000 [1835, 1840]), a Frenchman who took extensive notes as he visited some 55 U.S. communities over a nine-month period in 1831-32. He later wrote a two-volume book, *Democracy in America*, which is now considered a classic and is referenced regularly by scholars and politicians. A search of the *Social Sciences Citation Index* in the summer of 2001found more than 1,400 citations of Tocqueville's classic book. In an analysis of what he called American "civil life," Tocqueville was fascinated by the many ways that Americans unite and organize themselves. In his travels he found commercial and industrial associations and "a thousand other kinds" (2000, 489), including "religious, moral, grave, futile, very general and very particular, immense and very small." He believed that America's voluntary associations were foundational for the nation's political structures (Figure 3.2). His theory was that "a natural and perhaps necessary relation exists" between political and civil associations. "Civil associations therefore facilitate political associations; but, on the other hand, political association singularly develops and perfects civil association" (2000, 496). He believed it was not an accident that

Americans organized many associations, and he argued that in nations where political association was prohibited, "civil association is rare." Tocqueville was the first person, according to Cohen and Arato (1992, 16), to realize that civil society is an important locus of democratization. By that, they mean that civil society, which is distinct from political and economic institutions, is a place for democratic institution building.

Figure 3.2: Relationship between voluntary and civil associations according to Tocqueville

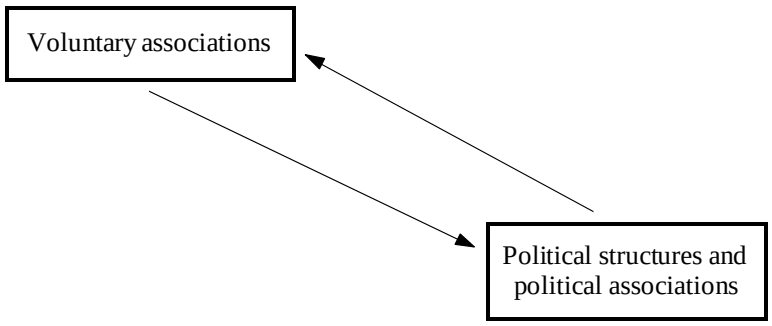


Illustration by Ed Wojcicki

Consequently, Tocqueville's work has been described as "political sociology" (Eisenstadt 1988). After Tocqueville's work in the mid-1800s, scholars evidently did not give much heed to the importance of citizen involvement in their communities for almost a century (Foley and Edwards 1998). They did not ignore the topic, but in general it was not an important concept for them. One notable exception occurred in 1883, when Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore hosted a graduate seminar on Tocqueville's classic book (Eistenstadt 1988). At that seminar, Scottish professor James Bryce criticized Tocqueville for his method. Bryce said Tocqueville wrote too frequently about his own theories, impressions, and speculation, rather than what he actually observed in America. Nonetheless, Eistenstadt (1988, 240) was one among many who have described Tocqueville's work as a classic or a "masterpiece."

More than a century after Tocqueville wrote about America, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1989 [1963]) broadened the multidisciplinary approach. In essence, they tested Tocqueville's theory about the effect of memberships in voluntary associations on the political activity *and* the political competence of citizens (Figure 3.3). They defined "political competence" as citizens believing they have an ability to influence government. They included in their description of what they called the "civic culture" both political culture and citizens' activities that consume more of their time than political activity. In 1959 and 1960, they interviewed about 5,000 people – about 1,000 each in five nations: the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. Their study was important in part because it was a cross-national comparative study, but also because, according to Verba (1980, 397), it was a multidisciplinary study involving "public opinion studies, macrosociological theorizing, psychocultural anthropology, and the technique of the sample survey." Their study showed strong support for their hypothesis about membership in organizations causing citizens to be more politically active. Yes, they found a *causal* effect. They found a strong correlation between organizational membership and greater political competence, and they also found a causal link.

In other words, they supported Tocqueville's century-old observation about the importance of voluntary organizations. They also affirmed the widely held theory about a relationship between citizen participation and the health of democracies. Verba (1980) later said one limitation of their study was that their major dependent variable was the "survivability" of democracies. That is, in their cross-national study, they looked at citizen participation and then drew conclusions about whether the democratic form of government in that nation was likely to survive. Furthermore, they found three other factors that led to greater political competence: (1) membership in a politically oriented organization compared to a

nonpolitical organization; (2) membership in more than one organization; and (3) active membership rather than passive membership. Although their study was widely cited and their book *The Civic Culture* has become a classic, Verba (1980) later wrote that their study "was a work meant to be superseded." Why? Because their cross-national study had limitations in scope, their samples did not allow them to do regional or racial/ethnic breakdowns, and they did not have the benefit of computers in the early 1960s to analyze their figures more extensively. But they did make their data available to other scholars.

A significant follow-up study using the data was conducted by Norman Nie, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., and Kenneth Prewitt (1969). Instead of using only "organizational involvement" as an independent variable, they added a second independent variable, "social status," and looked for causal links between each independent variable and their dependent variable, "political participation." They found a strong causal link between social status and participation, but only a strong correlation between organizational involvement and political participation. The key to their study was the testing of five intervening variables: (1) a perceived obligation or duty to participate in political life, (2) information as a political resource, (3) having a perceived stake in society, (4) social competence, and (5) political attentiveness. They could not find any intervening variables between organizational involvement and political participation, but they did find that social status does not directly lead to participation (see Figure 3.4). Instead, they found that having a higher social status causes people to have attitudes and acquire political information that makes them more attentive to political matters and therefore more likely to participate.

This study advanced the scholarship and the theory about civic engagement by testing a new variable, "social status," and by testing a series of intervening variables. They tested not only the citizen *activity* of organizational membership, but also an *attribute* placed upon citizens by society – "social status" – *and* citizens' *attitudes and opinions*, e.g., attitudes about their community and their opinion about whether they can make a difference. Adding those kinds of variables allows scholars to look at smaller pieces of the questions about why citizens participate. In studying citizen attitudes and political information and finding relationships unrelated to organizational membership, they raised new questions beyond those asked by Tocqueville (2000) and Almond and Verba (1963). They found new evidence, and thereby added nuances to the scholarship on civic engagement.

Civil society: The term "civil society" has deep roots. A number of scholars trace it and the study of citizen participation to philosophers such as Aristotle and other ancient writers (Almond 1980, Arato and Cohen 1992). Dahl (1956, 6-8) provides a link to past and current scholarship in his thoughtful work about democratic theory. He evokes philosophy and history by saying that James Madison relied on historical examples from Greece and Rome to prove a hypothesis about individuals or groups tyrannizing over others "if unrestrained by external checks." Dahl also says Madison employs widely accepted psychological axioms, and he refers to Hobbesian philosophy. So Dahl's analysis of political theory and how people will act in democratic societies becomes multidisciplinary – which is precisely what the study of civic engagement is today.

E.J. Dionne, a senior fellow in the Brookings Institution and a *Washington Post* columnist, provides journalistic and scholarly examples about the widespread use of the term "civil society." He edited a book of essays (1999) and was one of several writers contributing to a series of articles in the *Brookings Review* (1997). In the latter he called civil society "an

array of fine institutions that nobody can possibly be against" – churches, neighborhood crime watch groups, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, book clubs, Shriners, Elks, veterans groups, and others. He also says, however, that "every side wants to use it [the term civil society] for its own purposes." Thus, he says, conservatives use it in support of mediating structures between the individual citizens and the large institutions of public life. By mediating structures they mean churches, families, neighborhoods, and voluntary associations. Liberals also use "civil society" fondly, Dionne says, in their desire to supplement political economics with resources outside of government.

Although scholars and philosophers have developed and advanced the study of civil society in the United States in a variety of ways in the past 150 years, "civil society" is still not easy to define. Cohen and Arato (1992, 605) acknowledge "the pitfalls of trying to define a term that is used today in many different contexts and that has a long and still evolving conceptual history." Skocpol and Fiorina (1999b, 2) define civil society as "the network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs." In their thick tome, Cohen and Arato (1992) settle on a working definition of civil society as a social "sphere" of interaction (1992, ix) that includes the family and other intimate relationships, associations, social movements, and forms of public communication. The study of such extrapolitical and extra-economic relationships is important in an analysis of modern democracies, they say, "precisely because modern civil society is based on egalitarian principles and universal inclusion" (1992, 19). And they say they build their theory on the thesis of Tocqueville about activity in an egalitarian society. Thus, the civil society is a "third realm" (Cohen and Arato 1992) that is distinct from, yet related to, political and economic institutions. Notice a subtle difference in the definitions supplied by Skocpol and Fiorina (1999) and Cohen and Arato (1992). The former describe a "network of ties and groups" in

society, whereas Cohen and Arato talk about a “third realm” that includes the family and other intimate relationships. Family and home life involves relationships and private lives and clearly is a significant place where citizens spend time. But – in yet another unclear definition in the literature on civic engagement – it is uncertain whether family life is *always* part of civil society, because some aspects of the home life seem entirely private, while others blend into the community. If civil society is the third realm, Cohen and Arato state and other scholars concur, then the first two realms are governmental institutions and economic institutions, broadly defined. Civil society, by contrast, includes non-government and non-marketplace organizations, formalized social relationships and also family relationships, but it probably does not include private lives. The danger in trying to map that description is that in reality, the civil society, the government, the marketplace, and family life all overlap in complicated ways. A case could be made that civil society is not one of *three* realms, but *four*, with the fourth being the family or individual, private households. Yet, all three distinct roles and are a part of the greater community. So I drafted Figure 3.5 to illustrate three main points: (1) that civil

Figure 3.5: Where "civil society" fits into total community picture

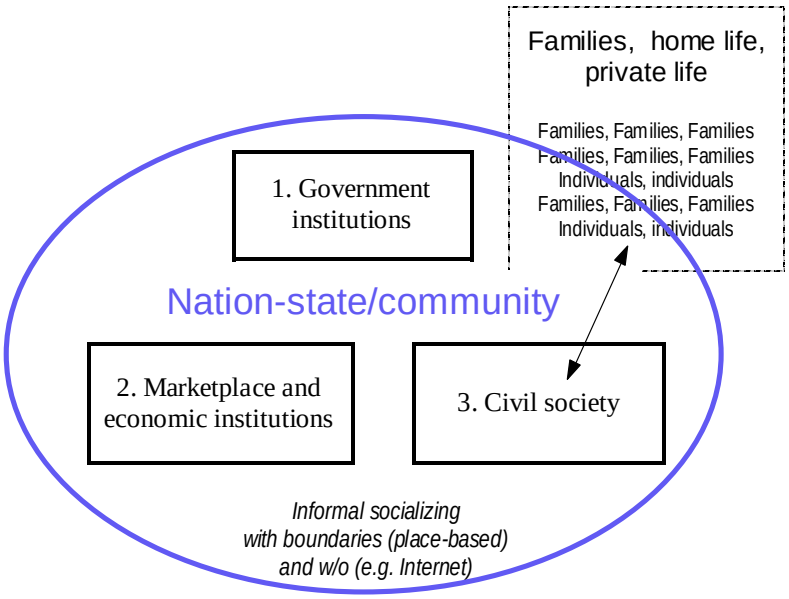


Illustration by Ed Wojcicki

society is an important community sector separate from government and marketplace institutions; (2) that civil society is one of the three main sectors, yet all three are part of a larger community, whether in a smaller legal entity such as a city or a much larger geographic region such as a nation-state; and (3) that the family institution and private lives must be shown as part of the larger community, but the family/private lives are both separate from community networks and a part of them.

Social capital: As the scholarship of participation and civil society moved forward in the final quarter of the 20th century, a major development occurred when two social scientists developed the term "social capital" in the 1980s. Those two were Pierre Bourdieu (1983) in Europe and James Coleman (1988, 1990) at the University of Chicago. The term "social capital" was used to complement the use of "physical capital" and "human capital" (Becker1964) as resources to facilitate production. But social capital does more than facilitate

production. As a resource that exists in relationships among people and the social structure of those relationships, according to Coleman (1988) and Paxton (1999), social capital becomes a *social resource* for individuals and groups as they interact in society. Bourdieu (1983, 248) provides a definition: "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group." Interestingly, five years later, Coleman (1988) claimed to introduce and illustrate "the concept of social capital" in the *American Journal of Sociology*. His claim was not accurate, because other practitioners and scholars had already used the term at least a half-dozen times earlier in the 20th century (Putnam 2000). Nonetheless, Skocpol and Fiorina (1999) credit Coleman, a sociologist, with convincing economists to pay attention to social ties and culture. Coleman puts social capital into the "rational actor" paradigm. That is, he uses a generally accepted theory for why citizens behave – the pursuit of self-interest – and shows that social capital is an important resource for persons in relationship to one another in society. He identified three forms of social capital: (1) obligations and expectations, which he said depend on trust in the social environment, (2) information flow, and (3) social norms accompanied by sanctions. Foley and Edwards (1999), in a review of 45 studies reporting empirical research on social capital, find that in a majority of cases, social capital is an independent variable affecting such outcomes as volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997), local economic development (Flora et al. 1997), government-community relations (Brown and Ashman 1997, Mazaika 1999), and organizational effectiveness (Baku and Smith 1998). In some other studies, social capital is a dependent or intervening variable and the *outcome* of various conditions in society or in communities.

Putnam uses the concept of social capital as the foundation of his recent research, book, and speeches. He believes social capital is declining (1995, 2000a, 2000b) and probably has received so much attention because he sounded an alarm bell about a potential "collapse" of American community (2000a). Though given much credit for reviving a national dialogue about social capital, Putnam provides a history of the use of the term "social capital." He thinks the first person to use it was L.J. Hanifan, the state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, in 1916. Putnam found the term "social capital" was then "independently invented" at least six times in the 20th century:

> … in the 1950s by Canadian sociologists to characterize the club memberships of arrivistes suburbanites, in the 1960s by urbanist Jane Jacobs to laud neighborliness in the modern metropolis, in the 1970s by economist Glenn Loury to analyze the social legacy of slavery, in the 1980s by French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu and by German economist Ekkehart Schlicht to underline the social and economic resources embodied in social networks. Sociologist James S. Coleman put the term firmly and finally on the intellectual agenda in the late 1980s, using it to highlight the social context of education.

Other scholars (Portes and Landolt 1996) credit Bourdieu as using the term "social capital" in referring to the advantages and opportunities that people get through membership in certain communities.

Few scholars equate social capital with the specific activities of individuals or groups. Instead, as Coleman (1988), a sociologist, explained, social capital is a *resource* defined by its function. It is to society what physical capital is to manufacturing, what financial capital is to entrepreneurs, and what human capital is to organizations and businesses. The Civic Practices Network, a Web site devoted to community building and citizen participation (Sirianni and Friedland 2001b), defines social capital as "those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems." Putnam (2000a), however, defines social capital *not as a resource*, but as "connections among individuals – social networks and

the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." In definitions and explanations, Putnam differs from Bourdieu, Coleman, and the Civic Practices Network in one important way. Bourdieu (1983) and Coleman (1988) consider social capital a resource emanating from connections among individuals, whereas Putnam defines social capital as the connections themselves, along with social networks and norms of reciprocity. Putnam's definition is less clear and less precise than those of Coleman or Bourdieu, who consider social capital a resource, or a kind of "social power," available to groups and individuals. Notice, though, that Coleman, Putnam, and the Civic Practices Network all raise the issue of social trust in the context of social capital. Trust is a variable that was missing from the Almond and Verba classic study of civic culture, and a topic I address in more detail in Chapter 4.

Foley and Edwards (1999, 148) show that sociologists often differ from scholars in other disciplines in their approach to studying social capital. They find that "for political scientists and the handful of economists and psychologists who have busied themselves with the concept," social capital refers mainly to attitudes measured by survey responses on social trust, norms of reciprocity, and tolerance. Political scientists also tend to see associational membership as a source of social capital (and *sometimes* an indicator of its presence), but they see civic engagement activities as an outcome of high levels of social capital. Sociologists, meanwhile, tend to conceptualize social capital as a social structural variable that is operationalized by social networks, organizations, or linkages between individuals and/or organizations. So social capital in this case resides in the relationships among people.

A more recent theoretical development distinguishes between social capital within a group and social capital that links one group to another. This distinction is described as "within group" social capital vs. "between group" social capital (Foley and Edwards 1999); integration at the group level vs. linkage between groups (Woolcock 1998); "social support and social

leverage" (Briggs 1998); "social glue and social bridges" (Lang and Hornburg 1998); and "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital" (Warren et al. 1999, Putnam 2000a).

Yet another theoretical development defines social capital not so much as a resource available to society, but as a public good that is indeed available to society but is subject to the free-rider problem and the tragedy of the commons. Giu (1996) discusses the concept of "relational goods" – intangible capital assets that exist in interpersonal relationships – and describes them as local public goods. Costa and Kahn (2001) say that social interactions and networks are mechanisms for the provision of public goods, and that despite the importance of social capital, "individuals have few incentives to participate within the community," and "the free-rider problem may be growing worse over time." This theoretical development is a departure from the dominant argument of the importance of social capital. Applying the "tragedy of the commons" to social capital, some scholars would suggest that citizens draw on social capital for their own personal benefit until the supply is depleted. But this line of thinking needs further development with a formula that would provide for citizens and groups contributing to the *supply* of social capital while simultaneously using it.

More recently, scholars are adding still another twist to the importance of social capital. Following the work of social scientists such as Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), who were concerned about the correlation between participation and social inequality, Wood (1997, 2001) and Foley, Edwards, and Diani (2001) say that people can tap into social capital *only when they have access to it*. Their idea, like many others, is that the resources of social capital are available in the networks in which people participate, but access to those social capital resources should not be assumed just because people are a part of a social network. In this view, measures of access are as important as the measures of social capital itself. Foley, Edwards, and Diani (2001, 278) turn this into a word equation that reads "social capital =

resources + access." They also say the measures of access are better indicators than resources generally available in a community.

To summarize, though, in most theoretical constructs, social capital emanates from interaction and relationships among people. Exactly how it is measured is the subject of another discussion. It differs from civil society because civil society is the network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another, and social capital is best defined – contrary to what Putnam says – as a resource emanating from those social networks.

Civic engagement: A term closely related to social capital is "civic engagement." Definitions and descriptions of civic engagement are even more inconsistent than those of social capital. It becomes especially confusing when writers and scholars use "civic engagement" and "social capital" interchangeably. It was ironic, for example, when Putnam and others associated with their national "*Social Capital* Community Benchmark Survey" [*emphasis added*] described that survey in the opening lines of its press release as "the largest [survey] ever on the *civic engagement* of Americans, laying the groundwork for a multi-year effort to rebuild community bonds" (*emphasis added*; Roper Center 2001, Saguaro Seminar 2001a). The terms "social capital" and "civic engagement" both received such prominence in that study that they appeared to be synonyms. They are not, but they are confused. When Putnam (2001) gave a speech at the University of Chicago and spelled out his arguments about a decline in social capital, sociologist Andrew Greeley (2001) rebutted that Putnam was actually talking about civic engagement, not social capital. Indeed, as Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000a) explain it, one person cannot physically or figuratively "have" social capital. But one person can perform acts of civic engagement.

Civic engagement, then, consists of the individual ways that citizens act in society. Brint and Levy (1999, 164) believe that the words "civic" and "engagement" have primary

and secondary meanings. Civic has to do with activities of citizens especially in relation to their legal status, in which it is acceptable to act out of partisanship and self-interest. A secondary meaning is broader but frequently used and refers to a more objective orientation for the needs of the civilized political community. Engagement, in this definition, means active participation in civic life. A secondary meaning, also frequently used, emphasizes the depth of involvement and implies that superficial or passive engagement is not as helpful to the community as giving deep and careful consideration to issues. That definition is reasonable, but unfortunately, it is not concise. Brint and Levy also say Tocqueville was interested in two types of civic engagement: "one based on participation of individual citizens in the associations of civil and political society, and the other based on the normative orientations sustained, above all, by institutions and democratic leaders." Sheilah Mann (2001), director of education and professional development for the American Political Science Association, says the term civic engagement is "broad, inclusive of motivations, developmental experiences, learning and knowledge, social and work settings and skills, all possibly contributing to an appreciation of democratic values and processes and involvement in these processes." Her definition is purposely broad. It mentions specific acts of individuals only implicitly, but it also includes thoughts, experiences, frames of reference, skills, and knowledge. That kind of definition, though inclusive, confuses the scholarship of civic engagement, because it does not separate a *description* of "civic engagement" from all the factors that *affect* it or from how activists and practitioners *use* it.

That is a recurring problem with the use of "civic" as an adjective for a variety of related terms, such as civic engagement, civic life, civic education, and civic renewal. Many use "civic" in the context of advocacy in a desire to promote the building of political institutions, community bonds, or individuals' participation in community or political

activities. The American Political Science Association (apsanet 2001) has compiled a list of 65 “civic education organizations that are actively engaging and fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life. These organizations, among others, are focused on a citizenry committed to the principal values that are fundamental to American constitutional democracy.” Some are university-based, such as the Civic Practices Network at Brandeis and the Civic Education Project at Yale, which works with universities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to assist with democratic reform. Not listed on the apsanet Web site, curiously, is the Campus Compact (Campus Compact 2001), a coalition of more than 750 colleges and universities “committed to the civic purposes of higher education.” The compact promotes community service that “develops students’ citizenship skills and values,” and it assists faculty who wish to integrate community engagement into their teaching and research. Notice how the words citizen and citizenship are also used in close connection with the “civic” terms. Apsanet talks about organizations helping citizens. The Campus Compact wants to help students develop citizenship skills. Besides the universities, a few other organizations listed by apsanet have an international focus: the World Affairs Council, the United Nations Association of the United States of America, and Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Still others are national organizations in the United States such as the National Civic League and the National Commission on Civic Renewal. Some are national foundations: the Kettering Foundation, the Pew Partnership for Change, and the Close Up Foundation. A common thread for most of those organizations and foundations is that they are advocates pushing for more citizen participation. But with some emphasizing community building, others focusing on democratic or political institutions, and still others focusing on the development of civic skills in individuals, it is evident they do not mean precisely the same thing in their use of

"civic" _____" – just fill in the blank. That is okay when it comes to advocacy, but not for the scholar who seeks a clear definition of civic engagement before he or she seeks to measure or study it.

Another scholarship problem throughout the preceding discussion of civic engagement is inconsistency in the meaning of "participation." Because "participation" is the way that people engage themselves in their communities, examining the operationalization of "participation" becomes an important part of this thesis. I do that in significant detail in Chapter 4, and so I will not spell out all of the citations and variables here. In brief, though, participation is defined or described or measured in various studies as:

- belonging to an organization, i.e., membership;
- taking part in an organization's activities, in contrast to merely belonging;
- contributing money, in contrast to activities or membership;
- taking part in a community organization vs. a political organization or activity;
- serving as a leader of a community organization;
- serving on an official government or quasi-government board or council;
- membership acted out by attending a meeting vs. membership acted out by writing a check to a national organization;
- informal interaction with friends or family members in a social setting; and
- informal action with Internet chat groups.

That list is not exhaustive, but for the purposes of this chapter about theory and lack of clarity about definitions, that is enough to show that use of the word "participation" does not always have the same meaning in scholarly studies. Various studies combine several of those types of activities in various ways to measure participation. The point is that the frequent and varied use of the word "participation" is yet another reason the scholarship is confusing. So

one aspect of my Hypothesis 1 is confirmed. The inconsistent and imprecise definitions of critical terms such as participation, civil society, social capital, and civic engagement are readily shown to be problematic in the study of civic engagement.

Conclusion: Working definitions

The study of citizen participation can be traced to ancient writers, and it can be followed historically through a number of disciplines, including history, political science, philosophy, sociology, economics, and anthropology. After Putnam (1995) emerged in the mid- and late 1990s with tale of a decline in "social capital," many scholars and journalists took issue with his measurements, definitions, and findings (Ladd 1996 and 1999, Samuelson 1996, Schudson 1996, Heying 1997, Wolfe 1997, Wojcicki 2001, Schuldt, Ferrara and Wojcicki 2001). Some of the criticism comes from scholars, with additional criticism coming from practitioners and journalists. They talk about each other and debate one another. What happened to the classic *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) has happened to much of the discussion about citizen participation and civic engagement. Thirty years after *The Civic Culture* came out, scholars tried to make new sense of its importance. David Laitin (1995) of the University of Chicago correctly concluded, however, that "conceptual clarity" of the concept of "civic culture" still had not been achieved. The links between citizen participation, culture, and political structures remained ambiguous, Laitin wrote, and "there was little policing by the scientific community to demand sharper specifications."

There still isn't. So sharpening that fuzzy picture is a major contribution of this thesis. Looking at numerous articles and books on the topic of citizen participation, I could find none that provided this careful analysis of the difference in the widely use terms civil society, social capital, and civic engagement. It was far more likely that I would find an article using more than one term without saying how the terms differ or whether they differ.

Yet, clearly from this analysis, the terms have different uses and meanings. Since a dominant theme in this thesis is about lack of clarity in definitions, I suggest definitions here that distinguish the three terms carefully. In providing these definitions, I wanted to be as brief as possible so as to make them understandable. These definitions do not, and could not, include all of the nuances about these terms. With those caveats, here are my own working definitions of three major terms:

- **Civil society:** the *network of ties and groups* through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs. This definition is essentially the one used by Skocpol and Fiorina (1999).
- **Social capital:** the *resource,* or collective power, emanating from connections among individuals, from social networks, and from social trust, norms, and the threat of sanctions, that people can draw upon to solve common problems.
- **Civic engagement:** the *specific organized and informal activities* through which individuals get drawn into community and political affairs. This definition is mine but, for the sake of continuity and clarity, is an adaptation of Skocpol and Fiorina's definition of civil society.

Chapter 4

MAJOR ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: PARTICIPATION, TRENDS, SOCIAL TRUST, AND THE RATIONAL ACTOR THEORY

Without a precise, universal definition of civic engagement, it is not surprising that scholars study the concept in different ways. To set it apart from related terms, I define civic engagement as the specific and informal activities through which individuals get drawn into community and political affairs. Civic engagement refers to the specific activities of individual persons. So the big questions are: *Which* specific activities? and *Why* study those?

Those are important questions, but it quickly becomes apparent that the study of civic engagement is more complicated than a study of specific activities. The *term* "civic engagement" refers to *activities*, but the *scholarship* of civic engagement involves *more* than an examination of activities, because scholars have found that individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and habits have a significant impact on what activities citizens choose for themselves. So the study of civic engagement involves not only a study of activities, but also a study of attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyle choices that affect civic engagement activities. In deciding, then, what should be studied, the answer is complicated. It depends upon the research question in any given study. It depends upon whether a researcher wants to analyze every possible kind of civic

engagement activity among a group of people, or whether a particular study is about a narrower topic, such as political activity, volunteering, making charitable contributions, church attendance, or the affect of trust on decisions to participate. The next chapter, which analyzes three recent survey instruments used in the study of civic engagement, identifies at least 47 variables. Not all scholars study all the variables, but most use a combination of them. With that many variables on the table, it becomes mind numbing to try to consider all the potential statistical combinations that could be used. The purpose of this chapter and the next chapter is to organize the research to make sense of how scholars are approaching the topic of civic engagement. This chapter reviews the literature to identify some of the major issues involved in the scholarship of civic engagement. The next chapter examines three prominent survey research instruments to identify in greater detail exactly which activities scholars choose to study.

The recent literature on civic engagement finds that scholars use many methods besides survey research. While survey research may be the most common (Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, Markus 2000, Saguaro Seminar 2001a, Campaign Study Group 2001, Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001), scholars also use historical studies, historical analysis, ethnography, case studies, and other kinds of observation and analysis (Dawson 1994, Wood 1997, Fiorina 1999, Ladd 1999, McRoberts 1999, Skocpol 1999, Putnam 2000a, Fung 2001). They also do considerable secondary analyses of others' work and write critical essays about civic engagement, civil society, and social capital (Will 1995, Ladd 1996, Lemann 1996, Samuelson 1996, Schudson 1996, Dionne 1997 and 1998, Elshtain 1998, Foley and Edwards 1999, Paxton 1999, Wojcicki 2001). In doing so, they draw on various theories, and they ask different kinds of questions that lead them in different directions. Admittedly, such is the pattern of scholarship on many topics. What sets apart the study of

civic engagement is that scholars come to various and significantly different conclusions in analyzing the same data and utilizing the same independent and dependent variables. It is reasonable to ask why. Why do scholars have such different opinions about what civic engagement is and whether it is increasing or decreasing in society at any given point in time? The answer can be found in their methods, definitions, and research questions.

For example, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) and Fung (2001) were interested in whether all Americans and Chicagoans, respectively, had equal access to various means of participating in civic activities. Meanwhile, Putnam (Gamm and Putnam 1999, Putnam 2000), Ladd (1999), and Paxton (1999) asked whether social capital or civic engagement was on the decline in the United States. That is why Verba, Schlozman, and Brady used survey research, and Ladd, Gamm, Putnam, and Paxton did different kinds of historical studies, amassing evidence and creating arguments from a variety of existing sources.

My first hypothesis is that scholars have conflicting conclusions due to inconsistent definitions and inconsistent conceptualization. This chapter provides, from a review of the literature, evidence to confirm my premise that scholars have conflicting conclusions about civic engagement. For example, Putnam says social capital is decreasing; others disagree. In previous chapters, I have written at length about inconsistent *definitions* related to the concept of citizen participation. This chapter takes the next step and concerns itself primarily with inconsistent *conceptualization* and, when applicable, with inconsistent model construction among scholars. For example, many scholars believe "interpersonal trust" and "social trust" are important to society, but they lack consensus on precisely why and how it affects civic engagement. Some study trust as an independent variable. Others see it as an intervening variable. This chapter, then, analyzes how and why scholars study civic engagement differently – and why this is confusing, and why that is important.

To organize this chapter, I examine a selected list of commonly used concepts, terms, and variables in the study of civic engagement, and I organize them around five broad topics: participation; general trends in society and the marketplace that affect participation; trends in civic engagement; the question of trust; and a philosophical question about individualism. The narrative will explain why I focus on these terms and concepts. Such analysis allows me to show the inconsistent conceptualization of civic engagement and related terms, thereby affirming my first hypothesis.

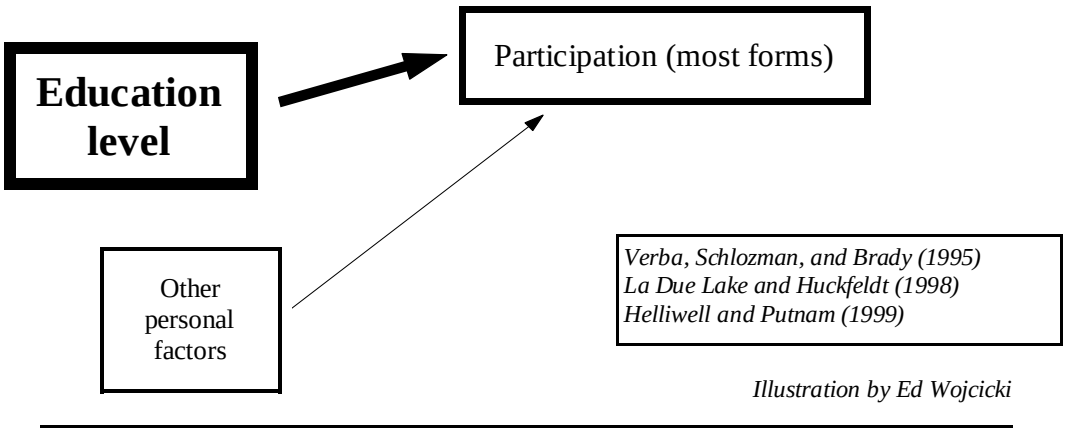
Participation: What is it and how is it measured?

I start with participation because it is fundamental to the study of civic engagement. What do scholars mean by "participation" and citizen participation? How do they operationalize those terms? Participate *in what*? Participate *how*? What do citizens do, how do they do it, why do they do it, and why is it important to communities and/or democracies? How do scholars approach those questions and what they learned? I address these questions by providing an overview of approaches in this chapter, and then in greater detail in the next chapter.

Researchers do not study "participation" the same way. Some surveys focus on political activity (Almond and Verba 1963, Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Verba and Nie (1972) said they were interested in activities that influence government directly, and they eliminated concern with what they called "support participation" – marching in parades, expressing support for a candidate or issue, or participating in government-organized youth groups, evidently because youth do not vote. Some more recent researchers, however, deliberately cast a wider net and ask about a broad range of political, community, and social networking activities (Markus 2000, Saguaro Seminar 2001a, Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki

2001). Still others focus on one particular area. The Independent Sector (Dingle 2001) is interested in volunteering, while various Gallup polls (e.g., Gallup News Service 1999) often limit themselves to a particular topic, sometimes on political issues but also on topics such as participation in church and faith-based organizations.

Figure 4.1: Predictor of citizens' participation in community organizations or events



Another line of inquiry about participation examines why people participate. Markus (2000) conducted two different kinds of surveys, one of 120 "civic elites" and another of 5,626 people in 14 different cities. In a major civic engagement project, he also examined many newspaper clippings, formed informal partnerships with local groups to get more information about the 14 cities, and examined NES and GSS survey results. Markus summarized a theoretical component succinctly in identifying three positive consequences of participation: It results in better citizens, better societies, and better government. Markus is among scholars (also, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 1999) who find a significant correlation between education and individual-level participation in society. La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998, 567) said "one of the most reliable results in empirical social

science" is the positive relationship between education and political participation (Figure 4.1). Helliwell and Putnam (1999) also found, with a twist, that a person's education is the most important predictor of political and social engagement. The twist is that they found that average education levels of a community are positively correlated with activity such as book groups and sports groups, but negatively correlated for unions and farm organizations. (But, unlike other studies about education levels and participation, Markus concluded the most important factor in nurturing and sustaining broad-based civic involvement is not education levels, but the effort of community leaders. He also found that communities with "reform-style structures" of local government such as city commission or council-manager have significantly lower probabilities of citizens' participating in a range of activities.)

One critical aspect about the effect of education levels often gets overlooked when scholars summarize that education is the most significant predictor of education. Education is important, yes, but several scholars (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Helliwell and Putnam 1999) have found the *relative* education levels of a community are more important than *generalized* or *absolute* education levels. Most theory and research on the effect of education assumes an absolute model. But the trouble is, as Carpini (1997) explains, that at some point civic engagement levels do not increase along with increases in general education levels, because a higher education for an individual at that point only serves to hold his or her place "in the sociopolitical hierarchy as others become more educated." Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996) find an important distinction between the effects of education on "civic enlightenment" – measured as political tolerance, knowledge of current political facts, and knowledge of democratic principles – and the effects of education on "civic engagement." Most important is that they find intervening variables between education and civic enlightenment and between education and civic engagement, but those variables are different. Between education and

enlightenment is a measurable cognitive proficiency, but between education and engagement is a more complex path of social networks that has to do with personal contacts and access to decision makers and opinion makers. Under this theory, no matter what the overall education level is, there will always be a relative number of people who enjoy the access that comes with personal contacts and networks. So more education is important to individuals, but that does not mean a higher education level for everyone will increase overall participation rates. Access is still issue, as I pointed out in the previous chapter (Edwards and Foley 1999). Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996) say this helps explain why civic engagement levels in recent decades are mixed or declining even though overall education levels are higher.

A concept related to access is who gets recruited to participate. Studies find education related not only to participation, but also to who will be *asked* to get involved. Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (1999, 429), studying the demographic characteristics of people who choose to become highly engaged, find that that political participation in America is "unequally distributed, hewing more closely to the fault lines of social class." They studied whether the recruitment of people in disadvantaged classes tends to increase their participation, but they found that the single best predictor of who will be recruited is education level. "Thus, beyond the individual endowments that make them more likely to be active, the well educated are also exposed to recruitment efforts," the scholars found. So "the inequality of civic engagement in unambiguous. …" (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 1999, 446-57).

Many scholars add to the body of knowledge about civic engagement by writing historical analyses and conducting secondary analyses of others' work, and sometimes combining that analysis with their own original research. This is especially prominent in the study of civic engagement. I have already identified the work of Markus (2000) employing this method. Wuthnow (1998) also did a major study by conducting a national survey of 1,500

Americans, reading news clippings about local organizations' activities, analyzing Census data, and reanalyzing data from more than a dozen other surveys. Paxton (1999), using new kinds of statistical analysis in asking whether social capital were on the decline, chose not to include political participation or volunteering in her model of social capital. She concluded that voting and volunteering are *outcomes* of social capital, not ingredients of it. Most other scholars seem to disagree, because they include voting and volunteering as important indicators of the level of civic engagement (League of Women Voters 1997, Wuthnow 1998, Ladd 1999, Pew Partnership 2000, Putnam 2000a, Campaign Study Group 2001, Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001).

Researchers also create categories in attempts to explain different ways that people participate. Verba and Nie (1972) created a typology of participants with six types of participators, labeled inactives, voting specialists, parochial participants, communalists, partisan activists, and complete activists. They identified a main characteristic of each activity pattern and identified a series of "expected orientations" for each type. They summarized their expectations in a table (1972, 82), which I copied above as Table 4.1.

Other researchers who created a typology after conducting survey research were Horrigan (2001) and Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki (2001). Horrigan created a typology of people who use the Internet for various purposes, after he conducted a survey of people about their use of the Internet. He categorized them into nine different types of people, including belief groups, a civic engagement group, and "political groupies." He also found "entertainment groupies" and "sports groupies" to be significant. Schuldt, Ferrara, Hogan, and I (2001), following our survey of Illinois residents, created a typology with seven types of participants in Illinois (Table 4.2 on following page). Like Verba and Nie, we also identified

one broadly active group at the high end and one group at the low end, with several specialized types in between. However, because we studied a far wider array of activities, we had a different kind of typology with different characteristics. I will address our work in more detail in Chapter 6. The point here is that researchers create such typologies to make sense of their analysis of many independent variables – that is, different kinds of activities – and cross-tabulations of their data. A typology becomes a way of organizing, for purposes of analysis, how citizens participate in their communities.

Table 4.2 Typology of civic engagement in Illinois: Relationship of typology to selected measures relating to overall involvement in community

Involvement Measures *(read down for means and percentages for each type)*	**Civic Leaders**	**Community Activists**	**Faith-based Activists**	**Cyber Activists**	**Informal Socializers**	**Informed Contributors**	**Relatively Disengaged**
Total civic engagement index:							
Mean	1.69	1.09	0.42	-0.13	-0.38	-0.44	-1.31
Percentile	95th	86th	68th	47th	36th	34th	9th
Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Considering any way you are active in your community, how active are you?							
Very active (1)	29%	16%	13%	4%	3%	6%	2%
Somewhat (2)	48%	44%	50%	29%	26%	27%	19%
Not very (3)	18%	31%	29%	35%	47%	34%	30%
Not at all (4)	6%	8%	8%	32%	24%	33%	48%
Total of very and somewhat	*76%*	*60%*	*63%*	*33%*	*29%*	*33%*	*22%*
Involved in any way in the past five years?*							
Involved	96%	82%	80%	52%	50%	59%	38%
Recruitment-related in past year**							
Another asked respondent to get involved	82%	59%	61%	44%	39%	45%	28%
Respondent asked others to get involved	79%	42%	45%	21%	18%	15%	13%

*The question was broad in nature: *In the last five years, have you been involved in any activity where you – either alone or with others – provided some kind of volunteer service for a group in the community – or tried to do something about a neighborhood or community issue or problem?*

**Respondents were asked whether they were asked by any one else *"to get involved with – or give time or service to – any neighborhood or community group, issue, project, or cause in the past year."* They were then asked whether they had asked any one else to get involved in the past year.

Source: Table copied from Schuldt, Ferrara, Wojcicki, and Hogan 2001

Another way that scholars study participation is by looking at different demographics. One of special interest is race. Putnam (2000a, 279-280) finds that African Americans have been dropping out of religious and civic organizations at least as rapidly as white Americans, and that the sharpest drop in civic activity between the 1970s and 1990s was among college-educated African Americans.

Meanwhile, scholars such as Michael Dawson (1994) at the University of Chicago use the tool of ethnography to examine whether race or class is an important variable in shaping African American politics as more African Americans become better off economically. He adds that one puzzle for social scientists is the lack of diversity of African American politics. “Many scholars and political activists ask, Where are black Republicans?” Dawson writes (1994, 6). One of his major questions is why African Americans have remained on the same page politically while becoming more economically polarized. He points out that the rise of a black middle class, while important, is still “so small as to be almost undetectable using social surveys” (1994, 74). Other studies examine race and participation by using case studies or ethnographies. Davis (1997) looked at community organizers in Chicago to determine their effects on getting people involved. McRoberts (1999) interviewed ten black Pentecostal pastors in Boston and found, contrary to other studies of what he described as conservative churches, that black churches have become important points of entry for community involvement. Wood (1997, 2001) took an ethnographic look at a faith-based community organizing federation and found political conflict to be as important as consensus building for the good of democracies. Fung (2001) examined the Local School Councils and community policing efforts in Chicago. He found that the best predictor of a higher attendance rate at local police beat meetings is the personal crime rate, not education level, in any particular neighborhood. Fung used the term

"accountable autonomy" to describe situations in which citizens at the local level have significant influence over the workings of local institutions such as schools and police, but in which the local groups are, at the same time, accountable to a higher authority such as the school district and the police department.

McRoberts' work (1999) is an example of yet another lens through which scholars look at community participation. That is, they look at citizens' involvement in churches, other places of worship, and in faith-based community organizations, programs, and social services, such as Catholic Charities, the Promise Keepers, or a soup kitchen. In the field of sociology, there is a publication called the *Sociology of Religion*, the publication for which McRoberts wrote his article. Saxon-Harrold et al. (2000) estimated that in 1997, there were more than 353,000 religious congregations in the U.S. – defined as local groups of people with common beliefs who meet together for religious worship. Nine in 10 use volunteers, making places of worship a significant place for volunteer activity, internally and in the community. Many places of worship offer programs for human and social services, health programs, international programs (including world missions), arts and culture, and environmental programs. On policy issues, 35 percent of congregations participated in coalitions to influence public policy, and 16 percent paid dues to an association or belonged to a coalition that advocated on their behalf. The study also shows places of worship receiving 60 percent – the greatest share – of total annual household contributions. Ladd (1999), Putnam (2000a), and Gallup (Anderson 1996, Gallup and Jones 2000) also point to the importance of religion in the realm of citizen participation. Gallup and Jones (2000, 25) say that the Princeton Religion Research Center Index – a measure of eight religious beliefs and practices – "has recently begun an upward turn." Ladd (1999) says "church is up; state is down," and he also calls churches primary meeting places in many communities. He finds a high correlation between church attendance

and charitable giving. Ladd also refers to the Promise Keepers, an independent organization attracting millions of men to gatherings advocating stronger Christian values, as an example of new ways that people are connecting to one another. Clearly, religion, places of worship, and faith-based organizations offer many citizens an avenue for community involvement. Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki (2001) found such places for a significant percentage of Illinoisans to be the primary or only place where they are involved.

Faith-based communities and places of worship are important contributors to another social trend – the rise of small-group movements (Gallup 2001). Some scholars (Anderson 1996, Ladd 1998, Putnam 2000a) have found people participating more frequently in small-group activities not only for religious purposes, but also in self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other formal or informal groups book clubs or reading groups. The study of small groups has been a particular interest of pollster George Gallup, Jr. (2001). While Ladd and Gallup consider such groups important for community health, Putnam (2000a) believes they do not have the same impact on social capital as more traditional civic organizations.

Finally, when it comes to participation, there is little data on what might be an optimal amount. Markus (2000) suggests there can be too much participation, because there is no empirical evidence that "political health" keeps increasing with more participation. Others write about a negative side of social capital (Portes and Landolt 1996, Elshtain 1998, Fiorina 1999, Putnam 2000a). That is, some kinds of participation, such as that of terrorist groups or hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, are generally considered damaging to society – yet it is "participation" nonetheless. Fiorina (1999) is among those who have concluded that participation can and does do harm. He says compromise used to be important for politicians who somehow made the system work. But now, he says, voices of extreme or near-extreme factions can prevail in politics (Fiorina 1999, 418). In other words, a small group of people

uses civic "skills" to enhance their own lives or policy issue in ways that do not always improve the community by most subjective standards.

Those are some of the arguments scholars raise in their discussion of participation. Additional important ideas and specific variables, such as organizational involvement, volunteering, and charitable giving, will be considered in following sections of this chapter.

Trends I: Is civic engagement going up or down?

Is civic engagement in the United States decreasing? Is social capital on the decline? Those questions are driving a significant portion of the debate about civic engagement today. Putnam (1995, 2000a) says it is declining, while Ladd (1999) and many others (Fukuyama 1996, Samuelson 1996, Skocpol 1996, Lemann, 1996 and 1998, O'Connell 1999, Paxton 1999) insist it is not. Many scholars use secondary analyses of data, sometimes combined with their own work, in attempts to answer that all-important research question.

Two historical studies explain this meta-analytical approach to studying trends in participation: *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000a) and *The Ladd Report* (Ladd 1999). Putnam's thesis statement (2000a, 65) says, "There is striking evidence … that the vibrancy of civil society has notably declined over the past several decades." In other words, social capital is declining, and that could mean trouble for America, he wrote. But Everett Carll Ladd (1999), the late president of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut, counters Putnam (1995) with strong language in his book. Ladd retorts (1999, 3-5), "We're building up our supply of social capital, not depleting it. … [W]hen it comes to civic engagement, it's just not true that the sky is falling. The stars are in their place, and the sky is pretty bright." These are the two basic arguments considered in the rest of this section.

The primary sources for the book *Bowling Alone* were official membership figures from many national and local organizations; the National Election Studies conducted virtually every two years since 1952 by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan; and the General Social Survey, conducted about every two years since 1974 by the National Opinion Research Corporation at the University of Chicago. Putnam also says he was fortunate to get copies of the Roper Social and Political Trends Archive and the DDB Needham Life Style survey archive. Putnam seemed especially fond of the DDB Needham archive, as DDB Needham is a large advertising agency that commissioned Market Facts, a commercial polling firm, to question Americans every year since 1975 about their consumer and behavioral choices. "From the point of view of social science," Putnam writes, "the DDB Needham Life Style data provide an unparalleled source of information on trends in social behavior over the past two decades" (Putnam 2000, 420). Putnam asserts that in the first two-thirds of the 20th century, Americans became more and more active in the life of their communities. But in the final third of the century, "we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities" (Putnam 2000a, 27). He is especially fond of what he calls "the long civic generation":

> … a broad group of people substantially more engaged in community affairs and more trusting than those younger than they. The core of this civic generation is the cohort born in 1925-1930, who attended grade school during the Great Depression, spent World War II in high school (or on the battlefield), first voted in 1948 or 1952, set up housekeeping in the 1950s, and saw their first television when they were in the late twenties. Since national polling began, this cohort has been exceptionally civic – voting more, joining more, reading more, trusting more, giving more. … As far as formal education is concerned, the members of the long civic generation were "self-made" citizens (Putnam 2000, 254-55).

The children of those people, however – the baby boomers – were less engaged than their parents, and now, the children of the baby boomers are even less involved, Putnam claims. Putnam isolated this "generational change" as the most significant independent variable

correlated with a decline in civic involvement (page 283). Putnam (1995) had issued the same thesis with his article "Bowling Alone," which has led to hundreds of follow-up studies and articles. He reiterated his thesis and embellished his arguments in the book published five years after the article.

The greatest criticism of Putnam's article (1995) is that he asked the wrong questions and did not measure enough of a variety of citizens' activities and ways of connecting to one another. Schudson (1998, 296-8) wrote in his book, *The Good Citizen*, "It may be that Putnam has not counted all that should be counted." Nicholas Lemann (1996, 1998) is another critic who says Putnam did not measure everything he should have measured. In two different articles, one of which was a review of Schudson's book, Lemann answers Putnam's reports of decline in association membership with examples of activities in which American participation has increased. He finds, for example, is that the number of participants in U.S. Youth Soccer doubled in 10 years from 1.2 million to 2.4 million members. He also said the number of restaurants in the U.S. increased from 203,000 to 368,000 from 1972 to 1993, and he chides Putnam slightly by saying that "from Putnam's perspective, that might be good news, because it means that people who are eating out are expanding their civic associations." Answering this line of criticism in a speech at the University of Chicago, Putnam (2001) stood by his analysis but admitted he is more of a "counter" than a theoretician. Putnam (2000a) also says that raw numbers are not as important as analyzing what proportion of the eligible population takes part in any given activity.

Theda Skocpol (1996), a Harvard sociologist, takes issue with Putnam's reliance on the General Social Survey. She says the GSS asks about "types" of organizations to which people belong, not group memberships; so newer types of gatherings and interactions may not be captured by the GSS questions, resulting in an undercounting of individuals' current

involvement. Skocpol also talks about the decline in PTA activity as more women have moved into the workforce. “Putnam argues that female entry into the workplace cannot explain membership decline because employed women join more groups than housewives,” Skocpol writes. “But he does not tell us what kinds of groups employed women have joined; nor does he explore the potential unravelling [sic] effects of the withdrawal of women leaders from locally rooted cross-class federations like the PTA.” Similarly, Ladd (1998, 199) says that focusing on the PTA is faulty research, because many parents are involved in some kind of teacher-parent or school-parent organization that is not affiliated with the national PTA organization.

Fukuyama (2000a) also says Putnam failed to address the fact that nobody seems to have data on newer, less institutionalized groups. “For every bridge club or Masonic temple that has folded, there are countless AIDS advocacy groups or Usenet discussion groups to take their place,” the critic said. He added that Putnam “fails to come to grips” with surveys that reveal no change or an increase in organization membership. Kush (2000) takes that a step further in his book *Cybercitizen* and declares the Internet’s most important promise lies in its ability to reconnect American citizens with their government. But Scammell (2000) says thus far, there is no new evidence of “huge new communities of participating citizens,” despite the fact Klein (1999) reports that the Internet has become an organizing tool – the “tool of choice” – for consumer, anti-corporate, and environmental activism. Fukuyama (2000) believes Putnam is “undoubtedly right” about near-universally accepted trends such as decreasing social trust and falling voter participation. But as happens in scholarly debates, even those generally accepted trends may not be unassailable. As McDonald and Popkin (2000) wrote for a conference at the American Political Science Association, scholars may not have been counting the number of eligible voters accurately in recent decades, so they may be wrong in their

generally held belief about a decline in voting by eligible voters. Using what they describe as a more accurate measure of the voting-age population than the widely used measure based on Census Bureau figures, McDonald and Popkin claim that since 1972, voter participation in presidential elections has remained essentially the same, but the error in measurement is increasing. So McDonald and Popkin, like many of the Putnam critics, argue that what should be counted is a critical factor in the scholarship of citizen participation.

Schudson (1996) also criticized Putnam's casual dismissal of the importance of the growing number of Washington-based mailing list organizations whose members' main activity is to write a check to join. "This is not Tocquevillian democracy, but these organizations may be a highly efficient use of civic energy," Schudson writes. "The citizen who joins them may get the same civic payoff for less personal hassle." Schudson also finds that the period from 1965 to 1995 produced great advances in women's rights, gay and lesbian liberation, opportunities for blacks, greater financial security for the elderly, and social movements advocating for consumers, the environment and public health, especially anti-smoking. He also cites the rise of the Christian right and says nearly all of this activity was built substantially on grassroots organizing. While admitting that Putnam has reinvigorated discussion on a vital topic, Schudson nonetheless concludes, "If we looked more carefully at the history of civic participation and the differences among generations, we would have to abandon [Putnam's] rhetoric of decline."

Brian O'Connell (1999) of the Independent Sector wrote a book, *Civil Society: The Underpinnings of American Democracy,* in which he analyzes many other studies to offer his own analysis of Putnam's concerns. O'Connell concludes that Putnam may be too pessimistic. He mentions two articles whose titles summarize the gist of their arguments: Ladd's "A Vast Empirical Record Refutes the Idea of Civic Decline" (1996) and Samuelson's column,

"'Bowling Alone' is Bunk" (1996). Samuelson looked at the same General Social Survey data that Putnam examined and drew different conclusions. He listed 16 different types of groups and concluded there were actually increases in participation in some of them, such as literary/art groups, professional groups, and sports clubs, and only modest decreases in most other categories. In light of those statistics, Samuelson questioned how Putnam could find a 25 percent drop in all group membership since 1974. Samuelson also criticized Putnam for lamenting "a loss of community" when in fact some social conflicts are not caused by a loss of civic life, but for reasons that eventually make society better. In other words, conflicts and protests such as the civil rights movement sometimes lead to improvements in society, and therefore it is wrong to want all social capital to build consensus or build community without conflict. "Americans [now] mingle across racial, sexual, and ethnic lines more now than ever," Samuelson wrote. "In practice, [the] changes [sought by social movements] triggered fierce disputes over government's role, women's and men's rights, gay rights, and abortion, to name a few."

Adds O'Connell (1999, 97): "I don't come out of [Putnam's] appraisal nearly so pessimistic or frightened. I don't think we are in a free fall. In fact, I even see signs that the trends are slowly improving." One source he cites is the American Association of Retired Persons, whose report conducted by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia found that America remains more of a society of joiners than earlier scholars had calculated.

In another book, Ladd (1999) analyzes many surveys and concludes the American dream still has a bright promise. Specifically, he finds that civic engagement is as strong as ever by the measurements of group membership, voluntarism, and philanthropy. Comparing data from Verba and Nie (1972) and General Social Survey data from 1987, Ladd (1999, 102)

found political participation increased in 10 of 14 categories, such as contacting public officials and working to solve local problems, but decreased in three categories, including voting and joining political clubs. Ladd finds it significant that volunteering is on the increase and that many people continue to give to charities. He created an appendix titled "An Honor Roll of American Philanthropy" – more than 20 pages of lists of monetary contributions. Indeed, as I delineated in the previous chapter, many studies look at both volunteering and charitable giving as measures of citizen participation. Nearly all are reporting increases in volunteerism in the 1990s – even Putnam concedes as much as one aberration from his general concern about a decline in activity. The Independent Sector (Costa and Kahn 2001) reports no decline in volunteering from 1988 to 1996. An Independent Sector (1999) report shows that about the same percentage of American households were giving to charity in 1998 as in 1987, and the percentage of population volunteering showed a higher level in 1998 (55.5%) than at any time in the previous eleven years. The average percentage of household income contributed was 2.1 percent in 1998, an increase from 1.9 percent in 1987 but less than the 12-year high of 2.5 percent in 1989. That percentage increased to 3.2 percent of households in 2001, but the Independent Sector (2001) warned against comparing this trend data because it hired a new survey company, used a random digitized dialing survey rather than block clustering and in-person interviews, and changed the wording of some questions. Deming (2000) agrees with Ladd that America is as civic-minded as ever, but he believes a list of new civic groups that have emerged in the past two decades provides too little understanding of social changes that should result in a new kind of civic awareness.

Costa and Kahn (2001) differentiate between social capital inside the home (entertaining friends and relatives) and outside the home (volunteering, joining organizations). Examining social surveys, time diaries, marketing studies, and studies of volunteerism, they

conclude that an overall decline in social capital has been overstated, but that two variables that are correlated with declines in social capital are an increasing community heterogeneity and income inequality. In other words, where there is diversity or significant gaps between rich and poor, there is likely to be a decline is social capital. Muller and Seligson (1994), in a multinational study, also found income inequality to be a significant variable – most significantly correlated with low levels of democracy. They also concluded, as had Higley and Burton (1989), that consensus among civic elites in support of democratic institutions and values may be the most important determinant of the stability of democratic regimes.

Some studies asking whether social capital is declining continue to blur any distinction between social capital and civic engagement. Costa and Kahn (2001) seek to evaluate trends in social capital from 1952 to 1998 and assess explanations for any observed declines. Paxton (1999) conducts sophisticated statistical analyses in search of empirical evidence of the decline of social capital in the United States. Yet, while concluding that overall, they are less pessimistic than Putnam in making pronouncements about an overall decline in social capital, both conclude that some of the *components* of social capital are declining, while other measures that go into social capital are not declining. Paxton's primary components are measures of trust and involvement in associations. She finds (1999, 121) a "strong and consistent decline in trust in individuals over the period 1975-94," but not a general decline in trust in institutions once she controls for major publicized scandals in particular years. Robinson and Jackson (2001, 117), similarly, find an erosion of trust from 1972 to 1998, saying also that each generation born after the 1940s exhibits a lower level of trust than the previous generation. If those trends continue, they say, "U.S. society will become pervaded by mistrust." Paxton finds some decline in her general measure of social capital, but says her statistical analyses "do not consistently support Putnam's claim of a decline in social capital."

Costa and Kahn (2001), meanwhile, controlling for education, do find declines in group membership, a small decline in the probability of volunteering, and larger declines in the probability of entertaining in the home. They find no decline, however, in the probability of spending frequent evenings with friends or relatives. In summary, Costa and Kahn (2001, 1) "argue that the decline in social capital has been overstated."

Two studies are not so concerned about a decline in social capital as they are in measuring to what extent citizens are engaged in their communities. The AARP (1997) concluded that Americans are far more involved with each other than might be expected. "The nation's social fabric – though stretched in places – appears to be intact," its report says, noting that 98 percent of those surveyed reported being involved in at least one activity that connects them with people outside their households. Similarly, the Illinois civic engagement survey (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001) reported that Illinoisans are engaged in their communities, but many "specialize" in their types of participation. Some people, are high on technology-related activities while others never use the Internet, while some are active in places of worship but in few other community activities. The specialization is so pronounced that I would say we are now a nation of civic freelancers.

Trends II: Culture, society, "moral capital," and the economic arena

In addition to talking about whether civic engagement and social capital are on the decline, scholars also examine whether and how changes in culture, society, and the marketplace are correlated with changes in the levels and forms of civic engagement. In such studies, scholars are usually less interested in whether civic engagement is declining than they are in finding causes or correlations between changes in society and changes in civic engagement. This line of scholarship is important because if the premise remains theoretically

correct that civic engagement is important to democracies, then it is important to understand what factors in culture or the marketplace cause or are correlated with changes in the forms and levels of civic engagement. If that is known, then, when certain cultural or marketplace changes occur, scholars could expect or predict changes in patterns of civic engagement.

Harrison and Huntington (2000) view culture as an independent variable that helps shape economic development and political institutions. They define culture as the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society. They conclude that culture can either affect or obstruct human progress, and out of human progress flow material well-being, economic development, and political democracy. Huntington (2001) says culture can be a primary obstacle to development in Latin America.

Heying (1997) investigated the effects of the loss of corporations' headquarters from Atlanta, where he conducted a longitudinal study of civic elites. He examined the structure of urban leadership in 1931, 1961 and 1991, and looked at memberships and overlapping memberships in the governing boards of business corporations, nonprofit institutions, and government boards and commissions. He found that business leaders who were once central to elite civic networks were affiliated with corporations that were overwhelmingly homegrown. This produced a community network cohesiveness that peaked in the 1960s and then began to erode. Heying uses the term "corporate delocalization" to describe the abandoning of hometown corporate headquarters and the massive buyout of major locally owned banks. He cites not only his own study, but also the work of others in other cities, and finds a similar corporate delocalization. This, according to Heying, has caused a significant loss of civic leadership that had formed "the backbone of local elite leadership." The important factor with the respect to civic engagement, Heying says, is not only the relocation of company headquarters and top leaders, but also "the elimination of place as an important variable in the

new economy." This has led to a pattern of decline of local elite networks that is likely to continue, and that will, in turn, have negative consequences on the philanthropic sector of the community and raise doubts about a community's ability to sustain its associational life. Heying acknowledges that his conclusion about a decline in associational life is similar to Putnam's, but he argues that the reasons can be found in corporate delocalization and not to Americans' growing attractiveness to television. Putnam (2000a) had blamed television for about 25 percent of the decline of social capital in the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Gans (1995), in an essay about structural problems underlying "democratic decay," also blamed television in part, saying that television wastes time and makes spectators of citizens. Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley (Edwards and Foley 1997, Foley and Edwards 1997, Edwards and Foley 1998) make an argument similar to Heying's by saying that a preoccupation with the restoration of social capital tends to ignore facts about major economic restructuring throughout the world.

Wuthnow (1998) argues that corporate downsizing, the relocation of businesses, and rising levels of education have led to an emergence of new social structures that he calls "porous institutions." By porous, he means less stable and more apt to change. For example, although people consider family one of their major sources of satisfaction, the definition of family is becoming more "porous" with more single mothers, stepparents and stepchildren, and more divorces. While that is evidently so, Belsie (2000) reports that in 1998, for the first time since the Census Bureau has been tracking such data, the majority of families consists of "DEWKS" – that is, "dual employment with kids." Wuthnow (1998) also finds porousness in employment, with more people changing careers and more businesses downsizing and outsourcing. Also, Wuthnow finds porousness in patterns of volunteering, as many people report creating individualized networks rather than long-term commitments as their interact

with health professionals, social workers, government officials, and nonprofit organizations in the course of their volunteering. Wuthnow's point is that such networking between professionals and volunteers is a more fluid kind of interaction – and more prevalent – than a more traditional kind of interaction found in the work of civic organizations. "Porous institutions, Wuthnow writes (1998, 59), "have [easy-to-penetrate] social boundaries that permit people, goods, information, and other resources to flow across them with relative ease."

Edwards and Foley (1997) also make an important argument about the welfare state and the institutions it has created to assist people on welfare. "[N]umerous studies have shown that the welfare state was the single most important element in the growth of nonprofit sector over the course of the 1960s and 1970s," they say. However, they say downsizing of the welfare state in the 1990s has played a role in increasing a general political and economic discontent among people working in and concerned about the poor and community services of many kinds.

Another concept some researchers use to describe a deterioration of American society and democracy can be found in the civil society literature but not in Putnam's article (1995). It is an expressed concern about morals – on the individual and societal levels. Putnam talks about social decline based structural changes, while others emphasize social decline based on shifts in morality or higher principle. Deming (2000) mentions sources such as the Republican Party and William Bennett as saying a moral decline is the cause of civic decline. While Putnam writes about social capital, Bennett and Eberly talk about moral capital. Eberly (1999, 106), providing an explanation rather than an endorsement, writes, "For this school [of thought], social capital is essentially moral capital. … The erosion of social capital and the collapse of social institutions has been caused by the rise of a form of untrammeled freedom that disregards moral authority." Indeed, while Putnam explains a decline in church attendance

and memberships in many church-related groups except for evangelicals and fundamentalists, his argument is consistently about a structural decline and not about the general moral fabric of American society. Even in a chapter when he mentions churches, clergy, and "ordinary worshipers" as part of the solution to the problem, he talks mainly about structures (Putnam 2000a, 409-10). He also takes the historian's perspective and mentions two Great Awakenings (from 1730-1760 and from 1800-1830), the rise of the Sunday school movement and Salvation Army, and more recently, the emergence of megachurches and fundamentalist churches as political players. "[M]egachurch leaders are savvy social capitalists, organizing small group activities that build personal networks and mix religion and socializing (even bowling teams!)," he writes. So his focus remains on social structures defined as institutions or associations.

That is different from the approach taken by groups like the Council on Civil Society, a project of the University of Chicago Divinity School and the Institute for American Values. The project issued a report (Schaefer 1998) that said America is losing whatever moral resources it needs to survive as a democracy. "Our democracy is growing weaker because we are using up, but not replenishing, the civic and moral resources that make our democracy possible. At the end of this century, our most important challenge is to strengthen the moral habits and ways of living that make democracy possible," according to its report "A Call to Civil Action." Participants in this project included Democrats, Republicans, scholars, religious leaders, nonprofit executives, and community activists. They cited a poll by Daniel Yankelovich, who reported these results: 87 percent of Americans believe "something is fundamentally wrong with America's moral condition," and 67 percent believe the United States is in "long-term moral decline." Those results were publicized at a time when President Clinton was still in the news frequently about his impeachment and scandal with Monica Lewinsky, but the survey cited other symptoms that threaten family stability, such as

teen-age pregnancies, children born out of wedlock, extramarital affairs, and casual sex. Interestingly, the council's report takes time not to call for a return to an idyllic Ozzie and Harriett era, but for a rebirth of a civil society, which it defines as "families, neighborhoods, and the web of religious, economic, educational, and civic associations." So it calls for structural improvements, too, but its rationale is rooted in morality, not the structures themselves. One of its goals states, "Our main challenge is to rediscover the existence of transmittable moral truth." That report, "A Call to Civil Society," was republished later in a book by Don E. Eberly (1998). The report includes a 41-point strategy for the "moral renewal of our democracy." Noticeably absent from its major categories from which changes should emerge is the federal government. The list of recommendations does call on the following structures to make significant changes: the family, the local community or neighborhood, faith communities and religious institutions, voluntary civic organizations, the arts and arts institutions, local government, primary and secondary education, higher education, business, labor and economic institutions, and media institutions (Eberly 1998, 217-243). The document's concluding statement says, "Democratic civil society is a way of living that calls us fully to pursue, live out, and transmit moral truth."

Trust and social trust

In recent studies of citizen participation, civic engagement, and social capital, perhaps no variable on citizens' attitudes is analyzed more than trust. Also, the issue of trust and U.S. citizens' confidence in one another is a frequent topic of pollsters. The Gallup Organization (2001), for example, has regularly traced Americans' confidence in more than a dozen institutions since at least 1973, and it also has followed Americans' ratings of the honesty and ethical standards of people working in about two dozen different fields. A recent press release

(Gallup News Service 1997), for example, pointed out that among 26 different occupations, car salesmen finished last, "as they have every time since their initial appearance in 1977." Pharmacists finished first.

The concept of trust shows up so frequently in the literature and the popular media, as if scholars and citizens understand its importance without saying why. The implicit messages seem to be that more trust among citizens is better for our communities and is correlated with stronger democracies (Brehm and Rahn 1997, Sullivan and Transue 1999), and therefore, any decline in trust is a bad sign. It somehow makes sense that society is worse off with less trust among its citizens, and one theory, which has become the conventional wisdom, suggests that declining trust is correlated with declining citizen participation. So scholars and pollsters measure trends in trust levels. However, as this section will show, recent empirical evidence testing such theories is mixed. It is not clear whether trust is correlated with the health of communities exactly as it is correlated with the strength of democratic institutions. It is not absolutely clear from the literature that trust is correlated with the health of communities, levels of citizen participation, or the health of democracies. Nor is it clear whether the direction of any correlation goes from trust to participation in organizations or from participation to trust.

The study of trust is important for at least four reasons. First, trust is not an activity such as voting or volunteering. It is an attitude of the mind. It is an emotion. So it is different from an activity, and for theoretical purposes, that means scholars must consider whether *activities* have similar or different effects on citizen participation than *attitudes or emotions* such as trust. Second, trust has important theoretical implications in the civic engagement and civil society debate. Scholars generally agree that trust is a variable affecting civic engagement, but they vary on exactly how and why. Does trust, and how does trust, affect citizens' decision to participate? Third, many studies ask whether trust is increasing or decreasing. That becomes

an important research question when theory suggests that trust affects levels of civic engagement or citizens' decision to participate. Fourth, scholars and journalists use the word "trust" frequently, but like most important terms in this thesis, the definition of trust varies. (Seeking a definition, I called the American Psychological Association and asked whether trust were an emotion, an attitude, a belief, or a feeling, but a spokeswoman could not provide an immediate answer. She said she would find psychologists with expertise on trust, and then she suggested the names of three people but admitted they might not be the sources I need.) Sometimes, "trust" is defined as levels of confidence that individuals have in one another. That is interpersonal trust. It can also mean social trust, and there are different kinds of social trust. One kind is based on knowing someone else personally; another kind is more generalized to strangers because of social norms. Still other times, trust is about confidence in institutions in general or in limited categories such as the government, community associations, the news media, or other specific group. That is often labeled trust in institutions. And, less frequently, trust refers to the perceived or actual trustworthiness of individual persons, which is different from generalized social trust or the specific trust that one person has for other individuals.

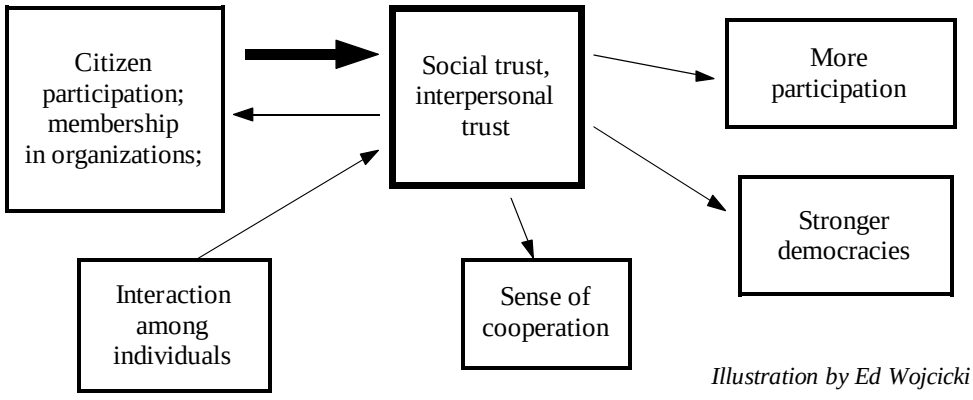
Political science scholars most frequently measure trust through survey research. A question commonly asked is: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" (*World value survey* 1981-1984 and 1990-1993; La Porta et al. 1997; Putnam 2001). This chapter examines how scholars examine trust in their study of civic engagement, but it refrains from delving too deeply into the philosophical arena, where many nuances of trust could be debated. My focus is on how scholars study trust in their study of civic engagement. At the same time, I acknowledge that trust is not the only attitude or individualized choice that citizens make that affects their decisions about civic engagement. I identify many others in the next chapter: how individuals

stay informed, whether they believe they can make a difference (this is often called “efficacy”), how long they have lived in their communities, their attitudes on specific policy issues, whether they believe their communities are good places to live, and more. While those are important variables, I have chosen to focus on trust because of its theoretical implications and because it is widely studied.

I start with theoretical explanations about why trust matters, whether trust is correlated with participation, and whether trust leads to citizen participation or is the product of participation. It turns out, like most of the terms and theories in this thesis, that theories about trust are still developing. Many scholars correlate trust with participation or association memberships (Putnam 1993, 1995; Brehm and Rahn 1997; LaPorta et al. 1997; Wuthnow 1998; Ladd 1999; Paxton 1999; Sullivan and Transue 1999; Claibourn and Martin 2000; Costa and Kahn 2001, Joslyn and Cigler 2001). Brehm and Rahn (1997) find relationships in both directions between interpersonal trust and civic engagement, but the path from civic engagement to trust is much stronger than the path from trust to civic engagement. So their study has strong evidence that engagement builds trust. Wuthnow (1998) explained that participation in civic matters gives people opportunities to overcome mistrust of others. Putnam (1993), in a study of 35 countries, found a strong correlation between the density of associational membership in a society and the aggregate trust level of its citizens, and also a correlation between membership and the relative health of democracies. His study indicates that trust might be an intervening variable between associations and democratization. This would show trust to be the result of participation and association memberships, which, in turn, leads to even more social interaction. Wuthnow (1998) and Paxton (1999) seem to agree; they say that civic organizations contribute to the social rules about trust by providing opportunities for people to come together as if trust were present. Paxton explains that when

a person is embedded in a group, he or she may assign others in the group a level of trustworthiness that is higher than the trustworthiness accorded to others who are not in the group. La Porta et al. (1997) consider that important because trust promotes cooperation, especially in large organizations in the business, civic, and governmental arenas, where people must trust strangers to be productive and effective. Joslyn and Cigler (2001) find that greater involvement in voluntary organizations contributes to increased trust in government after elections and affects positively "orientations viewed as enhancing of democracy." Thus, trust is a powerful intervening variable between associational involvement and government. The theory is that associational membership produces more trust, and in a more trusting society, there is a greater likelihood of cooperation, and that leads to, among other things, healthier democracies. Putnam (1995) and Brehm and Rahn (1997) argue that trusting and joining actually reproduce one another – that one leads to the other and vice versa, and thus are positive forces in community building and the stocking of social capital.

Figure 4.2: Explanation of correlation between participation and trust



Doubt about significant effects of trust: However, other scholars challenge the general theory about correlations involving trust. Two recent studies weaken the predominant scholarly thinking that there is a significant theoretical relationship between trust and group

memberships and between trust and the health of democracies. Claibourn and Martin (2000, 267), testing data from Michigan Socialization Studies from 1965 to 1982, cast aspersions on the theory about a causal relationship between interpersonal trust and group membership in either a positive or negative direction at the individual level. They concluded, "We find no evidence supporting the hypothesis that interpersonal trust encourages group memberships and only limited evidence suggesting that belonging to groups makes individuals more trusting." Foley and Edwards (1999, 141), in an analysis of 45 articles reporting empirical research on social capital, present "empirical, methodological, and theoretical arguments for the irrelevance of 'generalized social trust' … as a significant factor in the health of democracies or economic development."

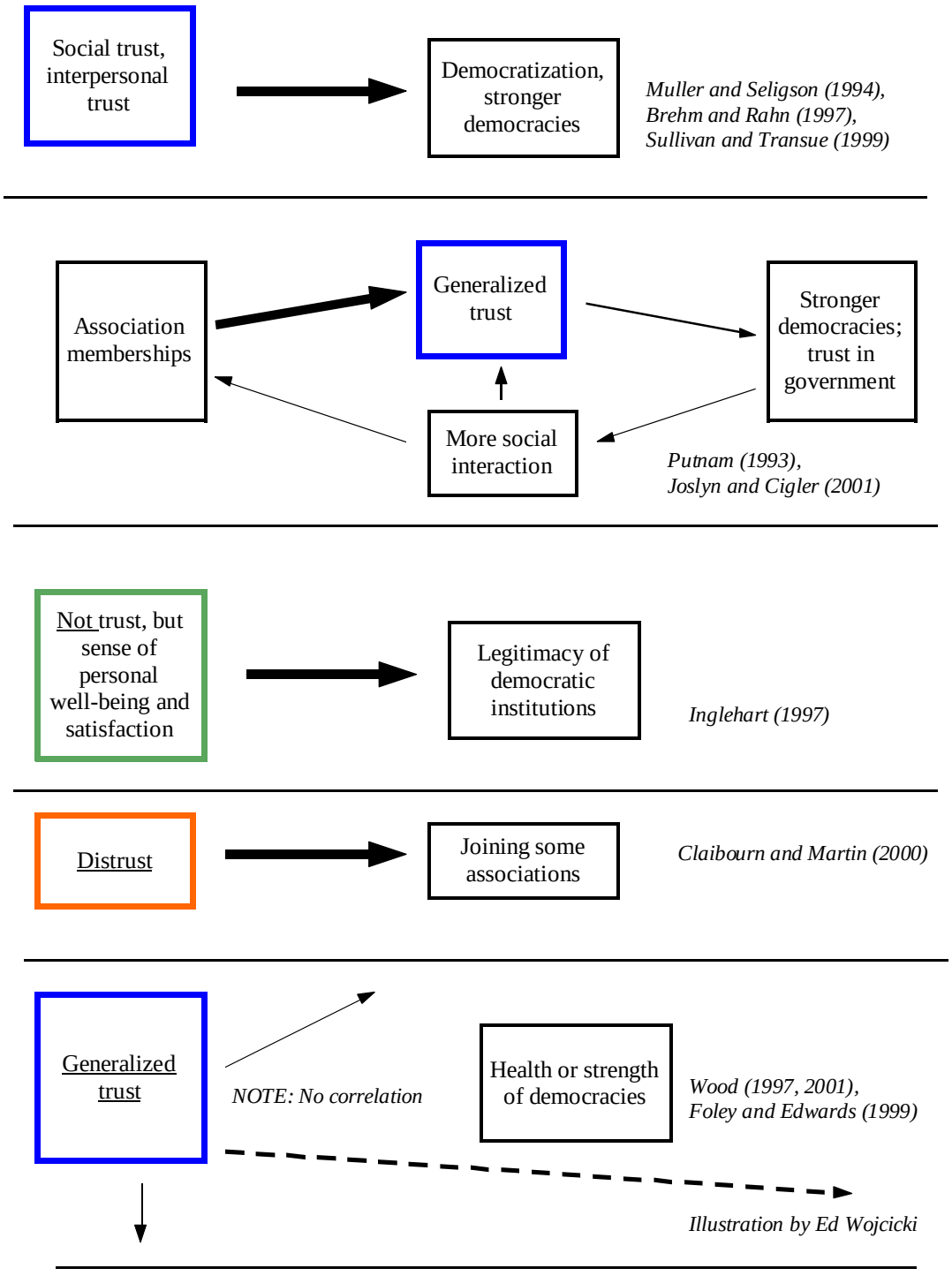
Also, Muller and Seligson (1994), in a multinational study, and Sullivan and Transue (1999) in a subsequent study, concluded that trust appears to be a product of democratization, not a cause of it. So they would not consider trust to be an intervening variable between individuals and healthier democracies. They found lows levels of interpersonal trust not to be a barrier to democracy in Argentina, Portugal, or Spain, and higher levels of trust not necessarily helpful in promoting democratization in Guatemala and Panama. And Stolle and Rochen (1998) found trust to be at significantly different levels when examining survey results from 43 different kinds of organization. For example, members of cultural associations, community interest groups, and personal interest groups had high levels of political trust, whereas political associations were less likely to be to positively associated with generalized trust, political trust and efficacy, no doubt because some political associations are established because of strong disagreements with the government. Inglehart (1997) argues that citizens' general satisfaction with their own lives – called "subjective well-being" – is a better predictor of the legitimacy of democratic institutions than direct measures of citizens' expressed satisfaction with political

institutions. That would evoke the political campaign question, “Are you better off now than you were four years ago?” to resonate well with voters. Claibourn and Martin (2000, 269) also argue “it is conceivable … that *distrust* of fellow humans encourages people to join groups.” Gallup polls (1997, 2001) and Ladd’s (1999) analysis of Princeton and Pew surveys show that people have different levels of trust about different kinds of organizations: Many people trust local fire and police departments, but trust in national governments and state governments is significantly less. Glaeser et al. (1999), in surveys of 258 Harvard undergraduates as well as results of two experimental “trust” games, found that individuals with better social connections trusted each other more. Also, individuals with more successful families, with more friends, and who volunteer and have sexual partners all elicited more trustworthy behavior.

Scholars seem to agree that social trust is historically and generally correlated positively with education levels (Putnam 1995, Wuthnow 1998, Foley and Edwards 1999). But Putnam finds it troublesome that in an era when educational levels have risen, Americans have become less trusting of one another, when the opposite should be expected. “The overall decrease in social trust is even more apparent if we control for education,” he wrote (page 73). Wuthnow finds that besides education, other significant predictors of trust are a good income, a home, a good neighborhood, and stable family relationships. On the other side of that argument, Smith (1997), Wood (1997, 2001), Foley and Edwards (1999), and Foley, Edwards, and Diani (2001) say that “generalized social trust” as a grand mean at the national level is a useless variable, because it does not address context-sensitive, localized situations in which social trust is of importance, for example, to a person’s feeling of safety. They wonder about the significance of aggregate national measures of trust, because national studies mask differences between rich and poor people, white and black people, and other groups. Furthermore, Smith shows that “negative social trust,” which he calls “misanthropy,” is as real

as social trust, and is higher among the less educated, those with lower incomes, those with recent financial misfortunes, among subgroups at the social periphery, victims of crime, those with poor health, non-church goers, and younger adults. Their point is that social trust depends upon a social context that is larger than the one captured by the usual measures of associational membership. Bennett (1986) studied "apathy," not trust, and also generally found that the citizens indifferent to government affairs tended to be young, with limited education and lower socioeconomic status. This is not a new idea. Another indication that trust depends upon a larger community context comes from Steggert (1975), who was reporting that survey data indicate that trust in city government was likely to be lower in cities when the percentage of the minority-group population is relatively higher.

Figure 4.3: Alternative findings of correlation between participation and trust



Rational actor model and individualism vs. altruism

Besides studying many variables to examine civic engagement, scholars also venture into more general discussions about human nature and society. Some of those discussions are philosophical. Some are sociological. Some are psychological. One line of questioning is a philosophical question about why citizens participate. Are humans naturally drawn to be with others; that is, are they social beings? Are people naturally inclined to pursue their own self-interests and interact with others primarily to benefit themselves? Or do they participate more generously, to promote the common good? Is it fruitful or harmful to individuals and/or society for people to pursue primarily their own personal fulfillment? This line of questioning is another lens through which scholars and social thinkers study civic engagement.

Tocqueville (2000) was concerned about the influence of individualism. For Tocqueville, individualism did not mean Emersonian self-reliance or Darwinian rugged individualism, but a form of self-withdrawal in which a person pursues a "self-interest wrongly understood" at the expense of society. This worried Tocqueville because he thought individualism causes people to have a devastating civic apathy. "Individualism in the Tocquvillian sense leads to apathy, apathy to despotism, despotism to stagnation, [and] stagnation to extinction," Schlesinger (1988, 102) summarized. "The light dwindles by degrees and expires of itself."

Elazar (1984) was not so pessimistic, but he did say in his classic writings about political culture that emphasis on "the centrality of private concerns" is a hallmark of the individualistic political cultural, one of three major political subcultures in the United States. He called the other two moralistic and traditionalistic. In the individualistic culture, public officials and citizens see political activity as specialized; that is, as the province of professionals and not laypersons or amateurs. So this culture would not see massive grassroots

citizen participation as desirable. But, according to Elazar, the individualistic political culture "is based on a system of mutual obligations rooted in personal relationships." This sounds like the language of social capital theorists, who emphasize social networks, but Elazar sees the "mutual obligations" emanating from the role of political parties and not from civic associations or other aspects of civil life. By contrast, Elazar also finds a moralistic political subculture in some parts of America, in which democratic government assists the "concerns of civil society" – yes, Elazar used that exact phrase – and in which citizens temper their individual pursuits for the common good. In this view, politics is a concern for every citizen, not just professionals, and government should intervene in a community's economic and social life. It is interesting that Elazar finds both individualistic and moralistic subcultures flourishing in American society in different places. Elazar's classic work also supports the theory that culture affects citizen participation and the health of democracies.

So the idea of individualism vs. the common good has been argued for a long time. Today, rational choice theory, much in discussion among scholars, provides a neutral and more theoretical explanation for individuals' tendencies to act and make choices primarily out of self-interest. Olson (1965, 2) argued that "rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests." The promulgation of that theory was pivotal in social science, Oliver (1993) says, because afterward, social scientists have treated collective action as problematic. Edwards and Foley (1998) concur, arguing that "the growing popularity throughout contemporary social science of the rational actor model and its relative neglect of norms, values, social networks, organization, and other context-dependent resources" suggests it now more difficult to use the social capital concept to explain why individuals would choose to act in the common good. They argue that social capital, human capital, financial capital, and

cultural capital are not identical in importance and not distributed equally, and social capital is helpful only if people have access to it – which not everyone does.

But others say it is wrong to apply the rational actor model too quickly to all things in political science. Oliver (1993) also says Olson's basic argument was wrong, because collective action is not always irrational, and interdependence and coordination can change individual decisions even if individuals do not benefit privately. Markus (2001, 426-28), analyzing a series of forced-choice items, found that individuals and the public at large tend to have both individualistic and communitarian impulses, depending upon the person, the issue, or the situation. "The portrait of America as a nation of rugged individualists is thus incompatible with the empirical evidence," Markus concluded, while noting that the subgroup of people who are most highly individualistic in their choices were almost all white, college-educated males. Indeed, a "display of pure self-interest" depends on the context, Lalman, Oppenheimer, and Swistak (1993) say, and especially in non-market settings, significant non-self-interested behavior such as altruism is often observed – and that requires a theoretical explanation of its own. The discussion of context leads Liebowitz and Margolis (1994) to conclude that the net value of an individual's action is affected by the number of other people taking equivalent actions (such as consuming a good or subscribing to a phone service), and that "network effect" also influences decision making. In more recent analyses, Zafirovski (2000) and Markus (2001) point out that some basic assumptions of the rational choice model have already been partly compromised within the field of economics, and that should give social scientists pause before forcing a conclusion that rational choice theory can or should become an integrative model for all of the social sciences.

Besides the rational choice theory, there are other ways to analyze the concept of individualism. Every major bookstore now has scores of books on the "self-help" shelves –

providing one indication that Americans spend a lot of time trying to improve themselves. That can be interpreted neutrally: It's just the way people are, and it's good that people seize their individual freedom (Schudson 1998). But Leo (1995) worries that American society has become an "Oprahized culture" that is obsessed with personal feelings and private experiences. Worried about a "low level of political discussion and debate," he is concerned that in a "culture of therapy," people monitor their own psyches but shy away from environments where they might learn civic and political skills. Bellah et al. (1996) complain that a focus on individualism and a "compulsive stress on independence" strain society, and they worry about the "consequences of radical individualism." However, Ladd (1999, 111), who thinks Americans are as civically engaged as ever, also believes the American ideology supports individualistic pursuits. He did not consider it unfair that two-thirds of Americans agreed with a statement in the 1993 General Social Survey that "people should be allowed to accumulate as much wealth as they can *even if some make millions while others live in poverty* [emphasis added by Ladd]."

Another philosophical tension in the civic engagement debates revolves around why people choose to do what they do. Putnam (1995) argues that American society and democracy were built on the strength of communities, associations, and citizens' willingness to connect with one another in a myriad of ways. But shortly after Putnam's "Bowling Alone" appeared in January 1995, the *Washington Post* (Powers 1995, D1) traced a history of Americans trying to be alone and trying to get away from one another. William Powers pointed out that the Puritans in the 1600s split into new communities when they could not get along, and that Anne Hutchinson "almost brought down the Massachusetts colony when she stated that people don't need a minister or a church because The Truth resides inside every individual. … And so it has gone [in U.S. history]." Powers writes of post-Revolution Easterners moving west to find land

and space of their own, of immigrants leaving everything they knew in Europe for new opportunities in North America, of those same immigrants and their descendants leaving urban settings for more private suburban lots as soon as they could afford it, and of "every character played by Clint Eastwood. … We are self-starters who know everything about self-help, self-awareness and self-promotion." Powers concedes that at many historical moments Americans have come together to build communities, form organizations, and even form a "communitarian" movement that stresses the connectedness of individuals. He points out that a tension between community building and individualism and have existed simultaneously at most points in American history. Powers responded sharply to Putnam's lamentations about a decline in membership in associations and politics. Powers drew a different conclusion: "The notion that man is at his best when he is alone may turn out to be America's greatest gift to civilization."

Taking a similar position in a more scholarly way in an article *for PS: Political Science & Politics*, W. Lance Bennett (1998) argues that while many group memberships have declined, other important forms of civic engagement have not. Talking about volunteerism, he looks at the DDB Needham advertising agency's Lifestyle Survey from 1975-97 and a series of five Gallup surveys between 1987-95. Combined, the surveys and polls show a deep decline in organized group memberships but stunning increases in levels of volunteering for both men and women. These data, he says, "suggest that something has happened that makes structured groups less attractive to citizens [who are] leading increasingly complex, individualistic lifestyles." He writes of a recent "promotion of personal lifestyle agendas" that has roots and ramifications that are both political and economic. He also writes that while public support for politicians and governing institutions has dropped, the public's interest in politics, both local

and national, remains high – but at a more personal level rather than at a national, collective level.

Bennett's theory is that significant economic changes have caused citizens to view their place in the world so much differently. Citing "numerous indicators of economic insecurity" from different studies, he concludes that many Americans are working longer hours, facing greater job instability, and not enjoying significant increases in living standards. "In short, increasing numbers of individuals found themselves on an economic treadmill over the same period in which group membership declined," he wrote. "Although people resist the idea of returning to an earlier social order, they acknowledge the personal challenges and hardships of their work-dominated lifestyles." Bennett's observations emphasize the growing influence of personal lifestyle choices, and they identify economic causes for changes in the relationships between citizens and their communities and government. "Personal identity is replacing collective identity as the basis for contemporary political engagement," he adds. Therefore, some people are finding government of little use for concocting remedies for the conditions that dominate their personal lives, but they continue to be involved with "lifestyle issues." The issues themselves may not be new – environmental politics, health and child care, job security and benefits, retirement conditions, the morality of public life, the control and content of education, taxation and government spending – but Bennett says,

> [T]he intensely personal ways in which they are framed is more recent. [For example], abortion rights conflicts revolve around intense commitments to personal choice. Consensus on health care reform breaks down over intense differences involving personal choice and the quality of care. … Common standards and binding public principles have become increasingly divisive and unpopular symbolic positions.

Bennett calls this an "uncivic culture" and sees it as a neutral, alternative way of describing what other scholars have lamented as a decline or death of civic cultures. But he does not want to go negative in talking about people who express anti-political or anti-government

sentiments. Instead, he sees the disappearance of civic groups prepared to mobilize for political purposes as a fact of life in an era when people build coalitions and networks to suit their own personal lifestyle choices.

In short, Bennett's analysis does not see a decline of civic cultures as something that needs fixing or revival. He sees a new paradigm without explicitly saying so. Instead of using terms that are alarming or anti-establishment, he says, "Adopting a more neutral term [that is, "uncivic"] enables us to see that the uncertainty, social dislocation, and anger that are characteristics of change can coexist with high levels of political interest, substantive engagement, and the search for new political forms."

Schudson (1998, 299) creates a model of civic participation in which personal activities become political, thereby leading to a conclusion that "individual political activity in the past quarter century has actually risen." He says women act politically whenever they walk into a room and expect to be treated equally, especially in places where women and minorities once were rarely seen. He says gay and lesbian people act politically when they try to become legally married. He says others "do politics" when they teach their children to read nutritional labels on products in the grocery store and when they join a class-action suit against the producers of asbestos or silicone breast implants. In short, Schudson argues that "individual choice," which is showing increases in many aspects of American society, is the "flip side" of social capital as measured by people's membership in, connection to, and participation in social groups (Schudson 1998, 302-307). "I think a reasonable observer must be agnostic on [the importance of social capital]," he wrote. "The decline in organizational solidarity is truly a loss, but it is also the flip side of a rise in individual freedom, which is truly a gain."

McBride and Toburen (1996) applied Elazar's analysis to popular television programs of the early 1990s. They tested whether television programs influence American culture

significantly, and they coded the cultural values elicited from television programs by using Elazar's three political subcultures. They found the individualistic culture to be most prominent on popular television programs.

Summing up with two books

It should be clear by now that scholars approach the study of civic engagement from many angles and perspectives. This chapter analyzes some of the major themes, and the next chapter will address more specifically several dozen variables commonly used in civic engagement survey research. To pull together the literature in yet another way, though, I have identified two recent books that grapple with the kinds arguments in this thesis. Both books include a collection of essays and studies about civil society (Dionne 1998) and civic engagement (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). The books' editors have a point of view of their own, but they recognize that other scholars, writers, and philosophers attack and discuss this topic from many perspectives, and they allow those voices to be heard. Even Putnam said on the back cover of Dionne's book: "I don't agree with every author in the collection because no one could. That's its strength: the book demonstrates the vitality of an important debate and the energy this subject inspires."

Interestingly – and perhaps an example of how widely the net is cast around this topic – Dionne says the precursor to today's debate about civil society was not Putnam, but a 1977 essay called "To Empower People" by Peter Berger and the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus. Keep in mind that Dionne is talking about "civil society," while Putnam focuses on "social capital." But Dionne's and Putnam's descriptions of the importance of community and voluntary associations sound similar. Dionne says Berger and Neuhaus made the case for government support of "mediating structures" such as the church, the family, the neighborhood, and

voluntary associations – structures that help mediate between individuals in their private lives and the large institutions of public life. Dionne says that two authors in his book, Galston and Levine (1998) do everyone a favor by sifting through piles of data and academic arguments "to give a highly nuanced view of whether or not civil society is on the decline in the United States. Their conclusion, at once sensible and provocative, is that while association building is far from dead, the associations now being built appear less likely than those of the past to foster civic involvement and political participation." They suggest it is also possible that social activism might be increasing even as political activism is declining (Dionne 1998, 10). From a research standpoint, one problem with Dionne's book is that it contains no direct citations and does not provide the original dates of publication of the recycled essays in the book. But Dionne himself and a number of the authors mention the original "Bowling Alone," and the book is rightfully cast as a player in the great debate.

The other book, edited by Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (1999), cites Dionne's book, but is more comprehensive with footnotes and references. Skocpol and Fiorina conclude that because people of different partisan and theoretical positions have converged, a new agenda has been born. Social scientists might say a new paradigm is either emerging or has emerged.

So the criticism of Putnam might be viewed differently if he is seen as trying to force new and interesting data into an old paradigm that is no longer adequate. The old paradigm is as old as Tocqueville's writings in the 19th century. Exactly what the new paradigm might be is worthy of great scrutiny, research, and debate – a debate that might be more fruitful than belaboring over the dozen or so alternative reasons why Putnam might be wrong, or at least wrong in his correlations. Citing the work of Starobin (1996), Joyce and Schambra (1996), and Weir and Ganz (1997), Skocpol and Fiorina (1999) acknowledge that the study of civic

engagement has, to a certain extent, become an old-fashioned "liberal vs. conservative" argument. That can cause writers and scholars to strive to be correct ideologically rather than empirically, and can become yet another reason the broad civic engagement discourse is fuzzy. Skocpol and Fiorina clarify the debate with these two observations:

- "Civic conservatives" think that families, churches, and volunteer groups can address social ills most effectively at the local level, and they see the revitalization of local voluntary groups as an important alternative to national government activities (Joyce and Schambra 1996, Starobin 1996).
- Liberals are likely to think of civic group activities in relation to government, they want partnerships between civil society and government, and they hope for a revival "from below" of populist organizations and social movements (Weir and Ganz 1997). They also hope this will empower ordinary people and re-energize politics.

Skocpol and Fiorina delve deeply into scholarly issues and methodology. They find limitations on survey research as the primary method of tracking citizens' attitudes and self-reported behaviors, and they find it limiting that scholars now studying civic patterns have had to rely on just a few surveys (primarily the GSS and NES) that have measured change over time. They agree with some of Putnam's critics who have challenged the use of that data. They are pleased that scholars have begun to ask more precise questions about the range of individuals' involvements in groups and community activities of all kinds. "[T]oday's investigations of American civic engagement are becoming ever more rich and varied" with survey research, ethnographies, and historical studies (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999, 9). Finally, like other scholars, they raise the question of social trust, which has become an important variable in many studies, some of which conclude that civic participation builds trust and that trust is a necessary prerequisite for a strong democracy. To the contrary, however, they point out that some social

activism, and indeed some democracies, started with organized conflict and a strong distrust of institutions, especially government.

So the body of research looking at social trust must continue, with scholars asking whether social trust or interpersonal trust is indeed an independent variable or an intervening variable that leads to community building and stronger democracies.

Chapter 5

HOW SURVEY RESEARCHERS LOOK AT PARTICIPATION

The last chapter described the broad framework of the study of civic engagement. It noted that survey research is a common method for studying citizen participation. This chapter narrows my focus and examines how scholars currently study civic engagement through survey research. The chapter contributes to the scholarship on civic engagement by categorizing the surveys' questions and variables into three categories in ways that no other scholars do. The three categories are: political participation, community participation, and the attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and lifestyles of individual citizens.

Analysis of three survey research studies

To do this analysis, I have selected three recent survey research studies, because all are relatively recent and comprehensive. The three surveys are:

1. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady are credible scholars. Their 1995 book, *Civic Voluntarism*, publishes the results and methodology of an extensive survey that has been cited in scholarly literature at least 220 times since it came out in 1995, according to the *Social Sciences Citation Index*.

2. The Social Capital Community Benchmark Study. The Saguaro Seminar (2001a), directed by Robert D. Putnam at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, was a three-year study of social capital and civic engagement in the late 1990s. It grew out of Putnam's initial study of social capital and led to this benchmark study of 40 U.S. communities in 2000 and 2001. Putnam calls this national benchmark survey the largest survey of civic engagement at the community level in the United States. Hereafter, I will refer to this survey as "the Putnam survey" or something similar when using a shorter description, due to Putnam's role in directing the Saguaro Seminar, his role in this survey, and his role as spokesman in its release (Saguaro Seminar 2001b). The results were released on March 1, 2001.

3. A study done for the Pew Charitable Trusts (Campaign Study Group 2001) and released in January 2001. The Pew foundation has taken a deep interest in civic engagement and sponsors several major programs to promote and enhance civic engagement in the United States. This survey (hereafter generally called "the Pew study"), which provided the data for the report, "Ready, Willing & Able: Americans Tackle Their Communities," was conducted by the Campaign Study Group (2001) for the Pew Partnership for Civic Change.

I will provide more details about the methodology and survey instruments of the three studies later in this chapter. These studies provide substantial insights into scholars' approaches to civic engagement today. In this chapter, I start by explaining the methodology of each survey. Then I compare and contrast the three survey instruments. The point of such detailed analysis is to demonstrate that scholars study civic engagement using significantly different variables and by asking different questions about the same variables. That is important because scholars, journalists, and citizens easily get caught up in the debate about whether civic engagement is on the decline, and that can steer them away from a reasoned, careful analysis of

whether researchers are asking the same questions, "counting" the same things, or studying the same behavior, activities, and attitudes. The scholarship would improve if researchers would agree on definitions and agree on what, exactly, should be studied in research on civic engagement. This thesis provides movement in that direction.

Methodology of the three survey research studies

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 535-37) oversaw a two-stage survey of the voluntary activity of the American public. The Public Opinion Laboratory of Northern Illinois University and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago conducted 15,053 telephone interviews of randomly selected adult Americans (18 years and older) in the last six months of 1989. Phone exchanges were "matched to the NORC national, in-person sampling frame." Each phone interview lasted about 15 to 20 minutes. That sample was reweighted and stratified by race, ethnicity, and level and type of political activity for a second stage of in-person interviews. In the spring of 1990, the NORC conducted 2,517 interviews of an average length of almost two hours. Most of the data in their book come from the longer in-person second interviews. The data are deposited at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan and can be accessed at ucdata.berkeley.edu/ucdata.html. Their book analyzing their findings was published in 1995.

For the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, TNS Intersearch used random digit dialing to conduct 29,200 telephone surveys in 40 selected U.S. communities from July through November 2000 (Roper Center 2001), and then prepared the data for analysis. The average length of the interviews was 26 minutes. A national sample of 3,003 respondents was culled from the total sample. The national sample deliberately contains an over-sampling of black and Hispanic respondents, with 501 non-Hispanic blacks and 502 Hispanics surveyed.

The Roper Center acquired and released the survey results. The national benchmark survey was another major step in a series of Harvard-based projects regarding civic engagement and social capital. Putnam (1995), the Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy at Harvard, attracted a lot of national attention – popular and academic – following the publication of his article "Bowling Alone" in January 1995. That attention led to the development of the Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America (Saguaro Seminar 2000a), a Putnam-directed project that gathered 25 practitioners and eight academic thinkers at eight two-day sessions from April 1997 through April 2000 to develop a series of strategies for increasing Americans' connections with one another. That project's final report, "Better Together" (Saguaro 2000b), was released in December 2000. Already in progress, meanwhile, was the national Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, which was released in March 2001. The Roper Center (2001) and the Saguaro Seminar described the benchmark survey as "the largest-ever on the civic engagement of Americans, laying the groundwork for a multi-year effort to rebuild community bonds." Data, the survey instrument, and results are available online (Saguaro Seminar 2001a).

The Pew survey results (Campaign Study Group 2001) are based on telephone interviews with 1,830 American adults, 18 and older, in the 48 continental United States. Respondents were selected by random digit dialing, with at least eight attempts made to the sampled phone number on different days and at different times. The Campaign Study Group conducted the surveys from October 25 through November 18, 2000. After the interviewers completed 1,000 interviews of a random sample, they screened additional respondents by both race and ethnicity to increase the samples of African Americans and Hispanics up to 500 each. Controls allowed the researchers to get "the appropriate number of interviews" (Campaign Study Group 2001, 91) from every defined region of the United States. Survey results were

weighted to adjust for variations in the sample regarding race, gender, age, and education. The Pew Partnership for Civic Change released its report on January 31, 2001. That partnership is one of several civic engagement projects funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. In fact, civic engagement is a major topic of Pew's public policy program, which distributed $25.7 million in 31 grants in the year 2000 (Pew Charitable Trusts 2001).

Variables in the three survey research studies

This section compares and contrasts the three survey research studies. I analyzed the survey instruments of all three and created Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 to make it easier to compare what the three researchers studied. I divided the tables into three categories: political activity and information (Table 5.1); community, church, and faith-based based activity (Table 5.2); and attitudes, beliefs, lifestyles and various behaviors (Table 5.3). Sorting the survey questions into those three categories is one of my contributions to the scholarship of civic engagement. One distinction I want to emphasize is my separation of community *activities* from *attitudes and beliefs*. That is important because in their study of civic engagement, scholars generally look at *attitudes* such as social trust and political ideology as well as individuals' *activities*. Definitions of civic engagement often include nothing about beliefs and attitudes, but scholars have found a relationship between attitudes and community activity, and so they find it important to study both attitudes and activity. That is why I said much earlier that civic engagement is *defined* as activities, but the *scholarship of civic engagement* includes a study of thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, habits, and lifestyle choices. That does not mean the definition of civic engagement must broaden; it does mean, in light of the definition, that it is appropriate to differentiate between activities and attitudes in the study of civic engagement. Drawing such a distinction is a way to combat inconsistent and sloppy definitional and conceptualization problems.

One important aspect of all three studies that does not show up in my tables has to do with demographics. All three surveys ask the standard survey research questions about a respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, age, employment status, family/household income, and level of education. Although such demographics are useful and interesting in data analysis, I do not dwell on them in this chapter because I more focus more on what is studied than on what is found. So here, I merely want to mention that all three researchers had a scholarly interest in the usual kinds of demographic analysis.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 58-65) admit that measuring involvement in organizations is complicated. In my view, they muddied their results by the way they defined whether a citizen was engaged in political activity. They listed 20 *types* of community organizations such as service clubs, veterans' organizations, labor unions, youth groups, art groups, social service organizations, and sports clubs, but they included the list in their questions about "political organization." They were interested in politics and political activity, and so in their study, they intermingled community service with political activity. They did not disconnect general community organization participation from political involvement. "A person is counted as an affiliate of a political organization," they wrote, "if he or she belongs to or contributes to at least one organization that the respondent describes as taking political stands" (1995, 342). In other words, if a person said she was a Girl Scout leader and the Scouts took a stand on preserving camping areas to protect the environment, that Scout leader would be counted as a member of a political organization whether or not she cared about the Scouts' public policy advocacy. It seems that with this method, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady forced the issue of linking community activity with political activity. They did not seem to care as much if a person were active in a community group that did not take political stands.

The Putnam study (Saguaro Seminar 2001a) more clearly and precisely separated organizational involvement from political activity. Perhaps that was due in part to the fact that the Putnam survey was conducted 11 years after Verba, Schlozman, and Brady were in the field. By the final half of 2000, scholars evidently understood the benefit of distinguishing between political involvement and other kinds of community participation.

So exactly what do the survey researchers study in their studies of civic engagement? The categories that I set up in the three tables provide the first answer: The scholars study citizens' political activity, community involvement, and church and faith-based activity. But they look beyond activities and also ask citizens whether they think they can make a difference, what prevents them from being more involved, how long they have lived in their community, and whether they consider themselves informed. The national benchmark and Pew studies also asked whether people feel connected to their communities. Asking about such attitudes and opinions is helpful, because doing so addresses the concern raised by Nie, Powell, and Prewitt (1969) that there may be a number of intervening variables between a person's social status and political involvement. In other words, it is useful and important to look for various reasons that people become involved. The Saguaro Seminar the Pew did just that – and in doing so, confirmed Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's comment that studying political and organizational involvement is complicated.

Given that problem, scholars face the task of fine-tuning their surveys on civic engagement to separate as many activity-related and attitudinal issues as possible. Why? Because they must not assume without research that there are correlations between any specific activity and political participation, or between any specific activity and a stronger democracy, however they may wish to define political participation or stronger democracy. It is important

to have a reason for studying any variable about individuals' community activity or attitudes and opinions about their community and their role in it.

Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 summarize the similarities and differences in the survey research. Especially striking are the similarities in what they study – what they consider important about civic engagement. So first I will spell out the similarities, and then I will look at some differences. The Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 538-570) survey instrument divides its questions into nine clear, major categories, plus demographics:

1. Political activity
2. Non-political activity [charitable and religious work and donations]
3. The subject [content] of activity
4. Reasons for activity
5. Reasons for inactivity
6. Attitudes on political issues and general ideology
7. Civic orientation [level of interest, specific knowledge, party identification]
8. Political recruitment [were you asked?] and stimuli [were you in organizations where policy issues were raised?]
9. Civic skills

10-19. Demographics, measurement of "free time," community roots, and family of origin [level of education of parents and political exposure in family of origin]

Those categories are listed here because Verba, Schlozman, and Brady listed them so clearly. The other two survey instruments did not contain such clear categories, except for their sections on demographics. The other two surveys organized questions in a logical way, but not in nine neat categories. To make sense of the similarities in the three surveys, I created three categories summarizing the surveys' substantive questions and variables. I created my own categories and used my own words to capture the essence of the questions and variables. For example, all three surveys asked about voting. So I created a variable in Table 5.1 called "Voting." A close examination of the surveys, however, shows that they did not ask exactly the same questions about voting. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady as well as the Putnam survey asked specifically if respondents had voted in the most recent presidential election. The former

survey also asked whether respondents generally vote in presidential *and* local elections, whereas the latter asked *only* about voting in the 1996 presidential election. Meanwhile, the Pew survey asked only one general question about how often a person votes, with a range from "always vote" to "never vote" as possible answers. I use that as an example to explain how I created what I consider to be reasonably named tables and variables. But I do not consider it necessary to explain in detail how I arrived at my exact language for all 47 variables mentioned in the three tables. The work of this thesis is to make sense of the scholarship of civic engagement today, so I feel comfortable in creating categories that reasonably summarize what various scholars are trying to study and explain.

Now, having explained how I created my three categories, I will compare and contrast the variables studied in the three survey instruments. After summarizing how my three survey research studies approach each category of civic engagement, I will immediately follow with discussion and criticism from other research and my own observations.

5.1 Questions about political activity	Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995	Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)	Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)
Registered to vote	Asked	Asked	Asked
Voting	In all, most, some presidential elections in your life; also, local; also, 1988 presidential election	Asked about 1996 presidential election	How often do you vote? (range of always to never)
Served on a local board or council (local unit of government)	Asked	Asked	No question about this topic
Attended a local meeting	Asked	Asked – included "*rally or* meeting" in question	Asked
Contacting officials	Asked	No question about this topic	Asked about communicating with local officials or media
Protest or demonstration	Asked	Asked	Asked
Informal interaction in neighborhood or community to solve problems	Asked	Asked	Asked – about helping a neighbor
Membership in political organization	Asked about hours and money given	No question about this topic	Asked
Active in political organization or campaign	Asked	No question about this topic	Asked
Made contributions to political org. or candidate	Asked	No question about this topic	Asked
Signed petition	No question about this topic	Asked	No question about this topic
Political information	Name your two U.S. senators, your congressman; question about the federal budget plus six more questions	Name the two U.S. senators from your state	Do you know what's going on in your community? Also, attitudes about 19 specific community issues.

5.1 Questions about political activity	Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995	Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)	Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)
Political recruitment	Were you asked to take part in political activity in past 12 months? Who asked? Did you do it, if asked?	No question about this topic	No question about this topic
Exposure to political stimuli in church or nonprofit organizations	In past five years, were you exposed to a political issue or been told for whom to vote by one of these groups?	No question about this topic	No question about this topic
Civic skills, opportunity	Have you had an opportunity to practice civic skills in three settings: church/ synagogue; on the job; or in organizations?	No question about this topic	No question about this topic
Civic skills, practice of	Have you written a letter, taken part in decision making at a meeting, planned or chaired a meeting, or given a presentation or speech?	No question about this topic	Have you sent a letter, telegram, or e-mail to media or local official about an issue?
Indexes	"Overall Political Activity Index" based on eight activities (p. 544): campaign work; campaign money; contacting officials; protest; community board; informal community participation; political org.	Includes a Protest Politics Index and an Electoral Politics Index	

Political activity and information – survey research (Table 5.1): All three researchers consider political activity an important aspect of civic engagement. All ask whether a person is registered to vote and actually votes. In addition, all ask about attending a meeting of a local public board or council, and all ask whether the respondent had participated in a protest or demonstration. It's interesting that Putnam puts "rally or meeting" in the same phrase, and he also asks about a protest or demonstration, whereas the other two researchers might consider a "rally" to be a demonstration rather than an official meeting. Also, Putnam

seems less interested in participation in a formal political group, as he does not ask about membership in, activity in, or contributions to political organizations or a campaign committee. The other two do. However, Putnam does include "signing a petition" on the list of political activities, whereas the other two do not. Finally, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady ask more detailed questions about political participation by asking about whether respondents were asked to take part in political activity and whether they were exposed to a political issue at a community organization or church function. Also, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady asked whether people had opportunities to practice civic skills related to political action at church, on the job, or as part of organizational involvement. Putnam did not ask if people had contacted public officials, but the Pew study asked whether people had sent written communication to the media or local official about an issue, and the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady study went further asked whether a person had written a letter, taken part in decision making at a meeting, planned or chaired a meeting, or given a presentation or speech. The Verba, Schlozman, and Brady study asked the most comprehensive questions about civic skills and political activity. But none of the surveys asked a more general question about "contacting" an official. The implication was there, but none asked whether a person had "contacted" or "called" an official, and none asked whether a person had talked to an official in person, either at a scheduled appointment or at a chance meeting. That is surprising, given the focus on local participation and given that citizens have many opportunities to interact with local officials in informal settings such as places of worship, stores, places of employment, and places of recreation. Nonetheless, with the exceptions noted, there is general agreement among the survey researchers about what should be asked about political participation, the category that is the most sharply defined among the three I have created.

5.2 Questions about community activity	**Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995**	**Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)**	**Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)**
Participation in community organizations	Asked about 20 *types* of organizations and defined involvement by membership in or making a financial contribution to a "political organization," defined as a group taking a stand on national or local issues (pp. 58-63). This was included in the "Political Activity" section of their survey. Not included here: Church or church-related groups.	Asked about participation in 16 different *types* of organizations. Added sports leagues, self-help groups, and Internet groups. Not included here: Church or church-related groups.	Asked if involved in community group or club other than political. Also asked about attending a neighborhood meeting. Also asked about sponsorship of food drives or walk-a-thons specifically with coworkers.
Membership in organization	Asked (see note in cell directly above this one)	No question about membership in organization	No question about membership in organization
Volunteer work for charity or nonprofit organization	Asked	Asked number of times for specific types of organizations, including place of worship	Asked – and also asked if volunteer work was on a regular basis or a "one-time thing"
Donate money to charity or nonprofit organization	Asked – other than church	Asked – other than religious causes	Asked – included religious org. and nonprofits in same phrase
Affiliated with/member of an organized religion	Asked	Asked	No question about this topic
Attend services how often	Asked	Asked	Asked
Participate in other faith-based activity or org. affiliated with religion	Asked	Asked	Asked – as part of broader question about volunteering
Contribute money to place of worship or faith-based	Asked	Asked	Asked – as part of broader question about donations
Watch religious programs on television and/or give money to them	Asked	No question about this topic	No question about this topic
Donating blood	No question about this topic	Asked	No question about this topic

5.2 Questions about community activity	**Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995**	**Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)**	**Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)**
Informally talking with neighbors	Asked about informally working in community or neighborhood to deal with a community issue or problem, past 12 months.	Asked how often talk with immediate neighbors; also asked if got together with others in immediate neighborhood to work together or fix something, past two years.	Have you talked with a neighbor about a community problem in the past month?
Informal socializing	No question about this topic	Asked 12 questions about various activities: parades, art events, card games, club meetings, visits with relatives, having friends over, hanging out with friends, socializing with coworkers, team sports, Internet discussions	No question about this topic
Indexes		Associational involvement, faith-based engagement, civic leadership, informal socializing, giving & volunteering (same index for both).	

Community, church, and faith-based activity – survey research (Table 5.2): This category is broader than the previous one. All three surveys separate church and faith-based activity from other kinds of community activity when they ask questions. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 61) argue that church membership is not a form of membership in a voluntary association, but that distinction is not crucial to my thesis, because there seems to be no disagreement that church membership is a form of community activity.

I include church membership and faith-based activity in the same category as other community participation because studies generally show that church or other place of worship is a major way that many people get involved in their community (Wuthnow 1998; Ladd 1999;

McRoberts 1999; Putnam 2000; Independent Sector 2001; Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001).

In this category about community participation, the survey instruments generally agree about what to ask when it comes to community and church involvement. However, the Pew survey was not as specific as the other two in asking about participation in community organizations. The Putnam survey named 16 *types* of organizations in which people might be involved, and the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady study listed 20 types. They did this because it is unrealistic to ask about every specific organization, even in a local community, although Skocpol (1996) is indeed critical of surveys that only examine types of organizations. The three surveys I studied established categories of organizations with the assumption that most people would see their organizations as fitting into one or more of the categories. But in naming each type of organization, they asked slightly different questions about participation. Putnam merely asked people to "just answer YES if you have been involved in the past 12 months with this kind of group" (Saguaro Seminar 2001a, question 33), with no definition of regarding what "involved in" means. By contrast, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, 542) asked for the name of the organization, whether the person belonged to the organization, and "a series a questions about the nature of the affiliation" with the organization. This survey was interested in any connection between organizational membership and political participation. They concluded, "A person is counted as an affiliate of a political organization if he or she belongs to or contributes to at least one organization that the respondent describes as taking political stands." Putnam did not go to such pains to define a political organization, although, like Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, he asked (question 34) whether "any of the groups that you are involved with [took] any LOCAL action for social or political reform in the past 12 months." Both survey instruments were interested in differentiating between groups that took political

action and those that did not, but only Verba, Schlozman, and Brady took the extra step of defining affiliation with a political organization.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's list (1995, 63) of 20 *types* of organizations are:

1. Service, fraternal
2. Veterans'
3. Religious or faith-based
4. Nationality, ethnic
5. Senior citizens
6. Women's rights
7. [Labor] union
8. Business, professional
9. Political issue
10. Civic, nonpartisan
11. Liberal or conservative
12. Candidate, party
13. Youth
14. Literary, art, study
15. Hobby, sports club, leisure
16. Neighborhood, homeowners
17. Charitable, social service
18. Educational
19. Cultural
20. Other

They asked respondents to say whether they were members of or had made contributions to any organizations of each type. Putnam, whose survey was conducted a decade later, added three types to his list: "self-help groups," due to the rise and visibility of such groups during the 1990s; "Internet groups," due to widespread increased use of that once-esoteric medium; and "sports leagues," due probably to his recognition that bowling and other organized sports leagues are a significant locus for community participation. Putnam's use of "sports leagues" is one way in which he sharpened the debate about civic participation. In the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady study, it was not clear whether sports leagues were included in "sports clubs" (a term that also suggests hunting and fishing, and a league is different from a club anyway) or "other" leisure or recreational activities. In contrast to the Verba, Schlozman,

and Brady and the Putnam studies, the Pew study asked in general only about involvement in a community group, but it did not list specific types.

The Pew study did ask about a specific form of activity that the others did not: sponsorship of walk-a-thons or food drives or other type of community activity *with coworkers* [emphasis mine]. Pew, unfortunately in my view, inserted three new factors into one that phrase: the possibility of (a) sponsoring a (b) food drive or walk-a-thon or other community activity with (c) coworkers. I call that unfortunate because first of all, people can *participate* in one of those activities without sponsoring it. The use of the word "sponsor" unnecessarily limits, and therefore probably confuses, the real question that Pew wanted to ask about community activity emanating from the workplace. The second problem with that question is that the workplace can be an environment in which employees are asked to do more than work on a food drive or walk-a-thon. They could also, for example, contribute money, donate blood, or attend an educational forum unrelated to their jobs. So why specify only two activities? Third, coworkers get together for purposes other than working an activity. They go to lunch and dinner, engage in recreational activities, and socialize with one another in their own communities and at conferences – all places where they might discuss community problems. So the concept of the effect of the workplace could have been explored more clearly in the survey instrument.

Examining in detail how the survey instruments dealt with community activities and organizational affiliation is critical, because that line of research has been a part of the scholarship ever since Tocqueville's work. In studying citizen participation, all three surveys advance the scholarship using survey research to specify many different variables: organizational membership, involvement, and participation, and whether the organizations engage themselves in political matters or policy issues. On topics on which similar questions

were asked in prior survey research, the new survey results would also assist in spotting trends in civic engagement.

Besides general community and organizational involvement, survey researchers also typically ask about church membership and attendance and other faith-based activity. They do this because studies consistently show churches and faith-based activities as a significant locus of citizen participation for many Americans. Because of the nature of faith and faith-based activities, there is no reason to assume in the scholarship of civic engagement that people go to church, say, for the same reason they contribute money to their local public radio station. So it is useful to separate faith-based variables from other kinds of community activity, to test if people differ in their reasons for church and faith-based activity compared to their reasons for other kinds of community activity. All three surveys I reviewed asked people how often they attend services at their place of worship. There was a time surveyors might have asked about attending "church," a term generally used in the Christian tradition. But with a growing number of Moslems and Buddhists in the United States and a steady number of Jews, researchers are properly asking about attendance at mosques, temples, and synagogues, and it becomes convenient to categorize all such buildings as "places of worship." A similar language issue arises to distinguish between activities at a church organization or institution – such as a church committee or council – and those of "faith-based" agency, such a social service agency whose purpose is to feed the hungry, house the homeless, or provide services for children regardless of the needy people's creed or race. Examples of such faith-based places in Illinois where people can volunteer would be a Salvation Army's used-items store or a Catholic Charities soup kitchen. All three surveys, besides asking about attendance at worship, also asked specifically about volunteering for a faith-based agency and donating to such agencies and places of worship. However, for that type of activity the Pew survey did not separate faith-

based activity from non-religious volunteer or contribution activity. Nor did the Pew survey ask what specific denomination or sect a person identified with. Putnam and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady asked people to identify whether they were Catholic, Protestant (and what Protestant denomination), Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist, or some other group. Since Pew did not ask, it could not make those distinctions.

One type of activity that only Verba, Schlozman, and Brady asked about was watching and/or contributing money to religious television programming or stations. With their survey conducted in 1989, they were aware of the high visibility given to four television preachers: the Moral Majority's Jerry Falwell and the Christian Broadcasting Network's Pat Robertson, and to Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker, two fundamentalist Bible preachers who also received considerable publicity related to scandals. By the end of the 1990s, religious television still existed, but no televangelist had the national stage as those four men did in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps that is why neither the Putnam nor the Pew surveys considered it helpful to ask specifically about religious broadcasting.

Besides organizational involvement and religion, other factors showed up on all three surveys. Two major activities are volunteering and donating money to charity. All three surveys asked about those activities, and all were interested in the amount of time spent volunteering. The Pew survey asked specifically if the volunteer work was done on a regular basis or was "a one-time thing." *Volunteering* is different from *membership* in an organization, and the surveys make that distinction by asking specifically about volunteering. All three surveys asked about working together informally with neighbors or people in the community to address a problem, although the wording of each question was different and the time frames were different: Pew asked about conversations in the past month; the Putnam survey asked about working together in the past two years; and the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady survey

asked about working together in the past 12 months. The Putnam survey also asks whether people had donated blood, but the other two do not ask that question. Finally, the Putnam survey asks 12 questions (compared to none in the other two surveys) about many informal ways that people get together. The Putnam survey wants to know whether and how often people interact at parades, art events, card or board games, club meetings, Internet discussions, and adult team sporting events; and whether and how often they interact by visiting with relatives, having friends over, hanging out with friends, and socializing with coworkers.

Why no telephone, golf, or U.S. mail? Three activities that show up in none of the surveys are use of the *telephone* or *U.S. mail* to communicate with others and number of *rounds of golf*, a sport and leisure activity known to be growing in popularity. Putnam and other recent researchers have expressed a great interest in the impact of the Internet on people's lives. Putnam (2000a) has said it is still uncertain whether the Internet will go the way of television, which has become an entertainment medium that isolates people, or the telephone, a communications medium that allows people to connect. Since Putnam seems interested in every possible way that people bond or interact – including informal ways and the Internet – and even uses the telephone as an example, it is interesting that he asked about time spent watching television but not about the number of telephone conversations. Perhaps the phone has been around for so long that researchers overlook it. But common sense tells us that the telephone is, for many people, a tool used to interact with other people daily. Common sense also tells us the telephone also is often used for volunteer and political recruitment and to schedule meetings and social gatherings, all activities of great interest to the researchers. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence would reveal that the telephone is an important communications tool for teen-agers, and the civic engagement of teens is of concern to many scholars and community leaders. So why, in all the research, are phone conversations less

important than the use of the Internet and e-mail and less important than in-person informal conversations with others?

Also, Tables 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrate that scholars are interested in many ways that citizens interact and exchange information. Yet, in these surveys, while fascinated with the new technology of e-mail and the Internet, they ignore the U.S. mail as a means of sharing information or asking for participation in ways such as making contributions or joining an organization. Again, anecdotal evidence suggests that many Americans receive numerous solicitations and requests to take action in letters and newsletters they receive in the mail. So why do scholars ignore the U.S. mail as an important path for connecting people?

5.3 Questions about attitudes, beliefs, reasons and various behaviors	**Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995**	**Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)**	**Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)**
Barriers to participation	Asked of people who engaged in no recent political activity other than voting; list of possible reasons shown to person being surveyed	Listed six potential obstacles: schedule/time; transportation; feel unwelcome; safety concerns; lack of information, cannot make a difference	Series of seven questions about barriers – three about the respondent's personal barriers but four about more potential barriers for anyone
Motivations to participate	Asked of people who participate; list of possible reasons shown to person being surveyed	No question about this topic	No question about this topic
Attitudes on specific policy issues	Asked about economic attitudes, aid to women and minorities, school prayer, and abortion	Asked about immigrants and censorship by libraries	Asked about 19 specific issues and how much of a problem each one is in the community; e.g., traffic congestion, crime, illegal drugs, hunger, lack of a sense of community, decline in moral values
Political efficacy (perception)	Would officials pay attention to your complaint?	Can you make your community a better place to live?	Do you agree that many community problems are too big for you to solve alone?
Ideology and party identification	Conservative or liberal? Democrat, Republican, independent, or other?	Conservative, middle of the road or liberal?	
Community roots: How long have you lived in your community?	Asked	Asked	Asked
Rating of your community as a place to live	No question about this topic	Asked	How would you rate the quality of life in your community?
Feeling connected to your community	No question about this topic	Do you get your sense of community from friends, neighborhood, living in your city, place of worship, place of employment or school?	Do you very connected, fairly connected, fairly disconnected, or very disconnected?
Optimism about future of your community	No question about this topic	No question about this topic	Best years ahead or best years in the past.

5.3 Questions about attitudes, beliefs, reasons and various behaviors	**Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995**	**Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)**	**Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)**
Social trust, general	No question about this topic	Most people can be trusted, or you can't be too careful	No question about this topic
Social trust, specifics	No question about this topic	How much can you trust people (each one separately): in your neighborhood, you work with, at your place of worship, in stores where you shop, the local news media, local police, whites, blacks, Asians, Hispanics or Latinos, Native Americans?	No question about this topic
Trust, government	No question about this topic	How often do you trust (a) local government and (b) national government to do what is right? (range from just about always to almost never)	No question about this topic
Exposure to news	No question about this topic	Time allocated to newspapers, television, use of the Internet; also asked about interest in politics and national affairs	Asked only a general question: How often do you follow what's going on in your local government?
Number of close friends	No question about this topic	Asked	No question about this topic
Number of people you can confide in	No question about this topic	Asked	No question about this topic
Description of friends	No question about this topic	Asked about friends who are leaders, of different specific ethnic group or race, civic leaders, gay or lesbian, professional of manual worker	No question about this topic
Who has a role in solving your community problems?	No question about this topic	No question about this topic	List of 16 different kinds of groups, such as the federal government, police, local news media, leaders, civic groups, school board, churches, and more

5.3 Questions about attitudes, beliefs, reasons and various behaviors	Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995	Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a)	Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Campaign Study Group 2001)
Indexes	No question about this topic	Social trust, interracial trust, diversity of friendships	No question about this topic

Reported personal attitudes, lifestyle, habits, perceptions, beliefs, and reasons for participation or non-participation – survey research (Table 5.3): All three surveys asked not only about specific behaviors and activities, but also about individuals' opinions, thoughts, emotions, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and some lifestyle habits and choices (see Table 5.3). Three examples of "habit or lifestyle" are how long a citizen has lived in his or her own community, citizens' reported political ideology and political party, and how much time individuals spend reading newspapers and watching television. Markus (2000) shows positive direction both ways between newspaper reading and civic involvement. Examples of "thought" are how citizens rate their community as a place to live and whether they believe they believe they can make a difference in their community. Examples of "emotion" are social trust, trust in government, and whether people feel connected to their community. Scholars believe all of these have an impact on a citizen's decisions about community participation in general and specific ways in which citizens decide to get involved. This thesis makes a contribution to the scholarship about civic engagement by categorizing citizens' habits, thoughts, opinions, and emotions separately from their community activities.

This is important because theory about civic engagement is complicated, as I explained in the previous chapter. Also, as Tables 5.1 through 5.3 indicate so clearly, scholars usually examine dozens of variables regarding citizens' community participation or political participation. With so many possible variables in any given study about civic engagement,

scholars must be careful in their analysis to discern whether any variable, such as social trust, is an independent variable correlated with political participation, or whether that variable might be an intervening variable between an another independent variable and political or community participation. Or, as some studies conclude – also discussed in the previous chapter – trust might be a dependent variable and the *product* of democracy, not a *cause* of it. So as more variables enter the picture, the scholarship must become more refined.

Table 5.3, which summarizes my analysis of the three surveys' questions about habits, opinions, thoughts, and emotions, departs more substantively than my other two tables from the actual order of survey instruments I am analyzing. These instruments typically place questions about community roots (e.g., "How long have you lived in your community?") with questions about community participation. But I separate the lifestyle question from the activity question to make it clear that measuring community *activity* is different from measuring anything else, and that any variable in this kind of survey has the potential to be an independent variable as important as any other variable being studied. Is a sense of efficacy (a feeling) more important to community participation than how long a person has lived in a community (a lifestyle issue)? Is party identification (a habit or belief) more or less correlated to political activity than exposure to news (a habit)? Scholars are asking these kinds of questions without necessarily asking which is more significant. I pose them here to exemplify that any variable in my tables is, potentially, a crucial independent variable in the scholarship of civic engagement.

What do scholars study when they study what lifestyle choices, habits, thoughts, and emotions might be correlated with civic engagement? As Table 5.3 shows, all three surveys asked people how long people had lived in their communities, and <u>all three</u> were interested in the following <u>attitudes</u> or <u>opinions</u>:

- Whether they believe they can make a difference in their community to solve problems. This is often labeled "political efficacy" when such problem solving involves working with or communicating with public officials.
- What they believe about specific policy issues. But the topics on each survey differed. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady asked about government's role in economic policy, aid to women and minorities, school prayer, abortion, and censorship of people who are openly homosexual, who believe blacks are inferior, or who are against all religion and churches. Putnam asked about immigrants and censorship by libraries. Pew asked one question each about 19 different, specific issues and how much of a problem each one was in the community. Examples of the problems mentioned were traffic congestion, crime, hunger, drugs, and a decline in moral values. Pew, clearly, was interested in citizens' perceptions about whether they could become involved in solving specific community problems.
- What prevents them from participating or participating more in their communities. All three surveys listed potential reasons for not participating, but only Verba, Schlozman, and Brady listed possible reasons that people do participate. Neither the Putnam nor Pew surveys prompted respondents by mentioning possible reasons that people participate in community activities.

The surveys asked other questions about attitudes and opinions, but on the following topics, only the surveys mentioned asked about the issue listed:

- Ideology: Conservative or liberal (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady [hereafter, VSB in this list]; Putnam.
- Party identification: Democrat, Republican, or Independent (only VSB).
- Rating of your community as a place to live and questions about feeling connected to community (Putnam, Pew).

- Optimism about future of community (Pew).
- Trust: Can most people can be trusted? and do they trust in government to do the right thing? (Putnam).
- Influence on solving community problems: Who has a role? (Pew)

Finally, in addressing lifestyle, only Putnam asked specifically how much time people spend reading newspapers or watching television, although the Pew survey asked whether people believe they are informed about what is happening in their community. And only the Putnam survey – in a category internally labeled "diversity of friendships" – asked how many close friends people have and whether those friends are of various, specified ethnic groups or races, and whether those friends are civic leaders, professional or manual workers, or gay and lesbian. With that line of questioning, it was not surprising that Putnam said one major opportunity for greater citizen participation was in the area of diversity of contacts.

All three surveys asked about a variety of habits, opinions, and beliefs that might have an impact on people's decisions to get involved or not get involved in their communities. The purpose of asking these questions is to search for variables positively or negatively correlated with general or political activity in communities. Whereas Tocqueville found a correlation between voluntary associations and the strength of democracies, scholars today are developing more complex surveys to find out whether attitudes are more directly and highly correlated with behavioral decisions.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes hundreds of questions from three major survey instruments on civic engagement. From the questions, I identify at least 47 variables, such as voting, volunteering, and giving money to charity. I then place each variable into one of three broad

categories: political activities; community activities; and individuals' personalized attributes such as attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyle choices and habits. I then organize the three categories and 47 variables on three tables, one for each category (Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). This serves four purposes. First, my three tables demonstrate visually how many variables are being studied for their potential impact on healthy communities and democracies. Second, my analysis establishes that researchers differ significantly in the sets of variables they employ – which makes it likely that they will reach different conclusions and have different opinions about correlations between specific variables and civic engagement and between civic engagement and the health of democracies. Third, since differences are found in just these three survey instruments, it is reasonable to assume that in a line of inquiry that includes hundreds of other studies and numerous methodologies besides survey research, conceptual differences among scholars will be significant. This, in fact, turns out to be the case, as I showed in the previous two chapters. Fourth, my creation of three categories to organize all 47 variables makes it easier to analyze and talk about civic engagement. With the need for a better model of civic engagement, scholars can reflect more efficiently on three broad categories than on 47 or more individual variables. My three categories are a convenient sorting mechanism to advance the scholarship and the debate.

Chapter 6

CASE STUDY: THE ILLINOIS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Barbara Ferrara had a great idea. Sometime in 1995, as I recall, the associate director of the Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Springfield brought me a copy of "Bowling Alone" (Putnam 1995). She had a passionate interest in civic engagement research, and she began working with Richard Schuldt, our colleague who directs the Survey Research Office at UIS, on a survey instrument. Then in July 1998, when I was the speaker at the United Way of Illinois annual meeting in Aurora, I asked Illinois leaders at my luncheon table if anyone was aware of any statewide data on civic engagement in Illinois. No one did, and back at UIS, neither did we. So we decided to gather the benchmark data on one state, Illinois. We became partners with the United Way of Illinois, collaborating with former UWI president Hugh Parry and then with new president, Robert Haight. Schuldt and Ferrara continued to work on the survey instrument, and they kept me informed about general direction and specific survey questions. We then secured corporate and grant funds to proceed with the Illinois Civic Engagement Project.

As project director, I was a participant-observer. With funding in hand, the research and citizen education effort began in earnest in 2000 and culminated with the Illinois Civic Engagement Conference on March 6, 2001, the day we released our final report (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001). Quite coincidentally, that was five days after Putnam and colleagues released the results of their national benchmark survey of civic engagement and social capital in 40 U.S. communities (Saguaro Seminar 2001a). Our research, and the Illinois Civic Engagement Project itself, is a case study that illustrates how previous scholarship on civic engagement can be used to develop new, benchmark data at a statewide level. Since this thesis is about the scholarship of civic engagement, the focus of this chapter is on our methods and the reasons behind them.

Research question: We stated our grand tour question simply. What are the levels and forms of civic engagement in Illinois?

Purpose of the survey: This was the benchmark survey on civic engagement in Illinois. Our survey was, to the best of our knowledge, the first comprehensive *statewide* survey on civic engagement of any state in the United States. Other surveys are generally community-based or national in scope. Our purpose was to establish baseline data on a multitude of civic engagement activities for the state of Illinois.

Development of survey instrument: Schuldt worked closely with Ferrara to develop a comprehensive survey instrument. They got started in the spring of 1995 and then proceeded in "fits and starts" (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001), with the final push coming after the survey was commissioned five years later. In the development of this questionnaire, they borrowed heavily from existing literature and survey instruments, but also wrote some of the questions themselves. Among the sources they used, according to Schuldt (2001), were Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), Verba and Nie (1972), Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman

(1999), and the National Election Studies. For a list of organizations, they also turned to the General Social Survey and a study by the American Association of Retired People (1997). For questions about the relatively new research topics of technology-based activities and informal socializing, Schuldt and Ferrara drafted their own questions. Because other civic engagement research found that many forms of citizen interaction and participation contribute to a community's strength, and because this was a benchmark survey, they chose to "cast a wide net and try to count all of the ways that people tell us they are connected with one another outside of their family routines" (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001, 3). Our idea was to collect a lot of data and analyze which variables seemed to be most significant. Then they, or other researchers, would be in a better position to ask more specific questions or develop a more specific line of inquiry later – building on this benchmark survey.

Schuldt (2001) and Ferrara, building upon earlier research, constructed 18 indices measuring various aspects of community and civic involvement (see Table 6.1). They gave more "points" for activities that seemed to take more initiative. For example, they gave 2 points for attending a public meeting without being asked, and 3 points for helping to form a new group since 1990. For most questions, the time period asked about was one year. However, for those activities that involved more initiative (and thus would be less frequent), they expanded the time frame, in some cases up to ten years. See Table 6.1 for a detailed description of the 18 indices and how they constructed each of them. Then they conducted a factor analysis, did some additional analysis, and identified eight substantive dimensions of civic engagement.

Table 6.1 Eighteen indices of various aspects of community and civic involvement, used to develop the Illinois Civic Engagement Survey (2001, and Schuldt 2001)

6.1 Indices and questions	*Min – Max*	*Construction rules*
Volunteerism index	**0 - 21**	For each of 7 types of volunteering (incl. other): add 3 for regular volunteering last year; add 1 for occasional volunteering last yr. The seven types are: 1) schools; 2) charity / social service; 3) youth organiz.; 4) civic organiz.; 5) hospitals, etc.; 6) arts / cultural organiz.; 7) other
Membership index (local)	**0 – 54**	For each of 18 types of local membership organizations (incl. other): add 3 for active membership last year; add 1 for being member last year. The 18 types are: 1) group sharing common interest; 2) sports/health club; 3) neighborhood, condo, block assoc.; 4) sports league/team; 5) youth service organiz.; 6) school service group; 7) labor union; 8) local business/ prof. group; 9) support group; 10) local seniors organiz.; 11) social club/organiz.; 12) music/art/drama/literary group; 13) service club/fraternal lodge; 14) civic organiz. interested in betterment of community; 15) veterans' group; 16) ethnic/racial/nationality club; 17) farmers' organization; and 18) other
Community organization participation index	**0 – 13.5**	
Attend meetings of neighborhood group		1.5 for attending any meetings last year
Worked with others in community/neighborhood		3 for working with others in past year
Helped form new group since 1990		3 for helped form group since 1990
On neighborhood board		3 for being on neighborhood board last 10 yrs.
On board of social service / cultural organization		3 for being on social service / cultural board last 10 yrs.
Community government participation index	**0 - 5**	
Attending public meetings official boards/councils		2 for attending without being asked; 1 for attending
Served on official board		3 for volunteer serving on official board, 10 yrs.
Religious organization activity index	**0 - 18**	

6.1 Indices and questions	*Min – Max*	*Construction rules*
Church membership		3 for active membership; 1 for membership
Attendance at services		3 for weekly; 2 for monthly; 1 for less than mo.
Member of board / 3 years		3 for active membership; 2 for membership
Member of another group		3 for active membership; 2 for membership
Volunteer time		3 for regular volunteering; 2 for volunteering
Contribution		3 for contribution to church / temple
Secular contribution index	**0 - 6**	
Give to local charity		2 for giving to local charity in past year
Give food, clothes, toys		2 for giving food, clothes, toys in past year
Give blood		2 for giving blood in past year (for free)
Public radio/TV index	**0 – 2**	2 for being member in past year
Party/campaign activity index	**0 - 8**	
Attend candid. forums, debates		1 for attending in past year
Attend campaign rallies, speeches		1 for attending in past year
Actively worked for party or candidate		2 for actively working in past year
Contributed money to party or candidate		2 for contribution in past year
Member of local party		2 for active membership; 1 for membership
Interest group activity index	**0 – 4**	
Contributed money to PAC, interest group		2 for contribution in past year
Member of cause group		2 for active membership; 1 for membership
Contact / petition index	**0 - 10**	
Contact with state, local public officials or staff		3 for non-prompted contact; 2 for contact
Write to newspaper		3 for non-prompted contact; 2 for contact
Petitions – signed		1 for signing petition in last year
Petitions – circulated		3 for circulating petition in last year
Voting activity index	**0 - 6**	
Registered to vote		1 if registered to vote
National election		2 if voted in past national election
Local elections		3 for vote in every local election; 2 = most; 1 = some / a few
Protest index	**0 – 2**	2 for any protest in past 2 years
Discussion index	**0 – 7**	
Discussion of local politics and current affairs		4 for daily; 3 for nearly every day; 2 to once or twice a wk; 1 for less than weekly (not never)
Discuss political issues and problems with: 1) family; 2) friends & neighbors; 3) co-workers		"Average" across questions that ask about frequency discuss these with the three types: 3 for discuss several times/wk; 2 for weekly; 1 for monthly (two "weekly" responses are

6.1 Indices and questions	*Min – Max*	*Construction rules*
		equivalent to "more than weekly")
Local news exposure index	**0 - 9**	
Read daily newspaper		3 for daily; 2 for every few days; 1 for weekly
Watch local news on TV		3 for daily; 2 for every few days; 1 for weekly
Listen to news on radio		3 for daily; 2 for every few days; 1 for weekly
Talk / call-in show activity index	**0 - 5**	
Watch or listen to shows		3 for several times/wk; 2 for wkly; 1 for monthly
Have called in to shows		2 for ever attempting to call in
Email / chatroom index	**0 - 8**	
Email activity		4 for every day; 3 for several times/wk; 2 for several times/mo.; 1 for less often (0 = never)
Chatroom activity		4 for every day; 3 for several times/wk; 2 for several times/mo.; 1 for less often (0 = never)
Internet information activity index	**0 - 17**	
Ever use Internet		1 for ever used Internet
Frequency use Internet as source for information		3 for daily; 2 for several times/wk.; 1 for several times/month; 0.5 for less often (but not never)
Information about local events from Internet		Within the past year: 3 for more than 10 times; 2 for 6-10 times; 2 for 3-5 times; 1 for 1-2 times
Visits to local websites		2 each for visits to five different types of "local" web sites: 1) schools; 2) local govt.; 3) local official; 4) local charity; 5) local civic group
Informal socializing index	**0 – 10**	
Participate in small group for recreation		5 for more than wkly; 4 for wkly; 3 for several times/mo.; 2 for monthly; 1 for less (0=never)
Go to local coffee shop/bar		5 for more than wkly; 4 for wkly; 3 for several times/mo.; 2 for monthly; 1 for less (0=never)

Source: Schuldt, Ferrara, Wojcicki, and Hogan (2001). University of Illinois at Springfield

The activities we studied (Schuldt 2001)**:** The substantive civic engagement categories that emerged from the factor analysis were:

1. Community involvement;
2. Religious activity;
3. Political activity;
4. Cyber involvement;
5. News exposure;
6. Discussion of current affairs;
7. Secular contributions; and
8. Informal socializing.

It should be clear from earlier chapters in this thesis why those categories were included in the Illinois Civic Engagement Survey. All of those lines of inquiry were included in at least one of the surveys I analyzed in the previous chapter. An activity such as chatting in real time on the Internet did not exist when Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) developed their survey instrument in 1989. But because much theory suggests that many kinds of interactions contribute to social capital, community health, and/or the strength of democracies, Schuldt and Ferrara drafted questions about the fast-growing use of electronic mail and the Internet. That proved fruitful, because in developing a typology of engagement after conducting the survey, we called one of their seven groups "Cyber-Activists" (Schuldt, Ferrara, and Wojcicki 2001, 9). That type is more technologically engaged than the typical person in any other group, socializes informally at a high level, but is "significantly less engaged than the other leaders and activists in religious activity, exposure to sources of news, and making donations."

Schuldt and Ferrara got creative in developing the idea of tracking "informal socializing" in a civic engagement survey. Much of the previous research looked only at formal or organized ways that people participate, such as through an organization or place of worship or through a formal method such as voting. But in a society that is changing in many ways, and in light of all the literature about Americans pursuing more individualistic social paths, it makes sense to look at all the ways they try to connect with other people. It makes sense to test

how important informal socializing is to people, and whether any social capital emanating from informal interaction is as helpful to society as more formal ways of acting and interacting. Getting a reliable answer will require additional research. But one clue comes from the civic engagement survey of the American Association of Retired People (1997). That report included a "Social Involvement Index" – a mixture of community activities such as volunteering and informal activities such as visiting with friends and spending time with neighbors. That is probably useful, because looking at American society through both informal and more formal ways of interacting, the AARP concluded that the nation's social fabric "appears to be intact."

In addition to asking about the eight categories of engagement, our survey also asked about some personal attitudes. I have already established that other research has found that attitudes are correlated with engagement, so it makes sense to ask about them. Among the attitudinal topics covered on the Illinois Civic Engagement Survey were perceived motivations for and barriers to getting involved in one's community, rating of one's community as a place to live, whether people feel like they fit in their community, whether people feel they can make a difference, and the performance of local government. The survey also asked about some personal habits, such as reading the newspaper, watching television, and using Internet. It also asked a series of questions about community activity related to one's place of work, such as being encouraged by an employer to volunteer or give to charity, or engaging with coworkers in community activity.

Methodology:[1] After a pretest, the Survey Research Office conducted telephone interviews with more than 1,000 respondents beginning in late November 2000 and ending in

[1] Most of the language in this chapter about the methodology and the strengths and weaknesses of our study is taken or adapted from "Profile of Illinois: An Engaged State," by Richard Schuldt, Barbara Ferrara, and Ed Wojcicki, 2001. Schuldt and Ferrara did most of the original analysis, and I edited the entire report.

mid-February 2001. Nearly 1,050 (1,048) began the interview, and 1,001 completed the entire interview. The average length of the interview was more than 30 minutes (median = 33 minutes). The telephone interviewing was conducted from the interviewing laboratory of the Survey Research Office of the University of Illinois at Springfield. Overall, the sampling error for a statewide random sample of this size (about 1,000) is +/- 3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The sampling error for subgroups is greater. Examination of the demographic characteristics of the actual respondents suggested that the final sample needed to be adjusted for region of state, gender, race/ethnicity, and unlisted/listed number. Accordingly, these adjustments were made. Statisticians call this "weighting." In addition, because of the length of the survey, the researchers were concerned about a bias among those who did complete the whole survey. So they called back households that originally refused the longer interview and offered to give them an abbreviated 10-minute version. The abbreviated interview contained questions about community involvement over the last five years so that they could gain some indication of how much, if any, the original sample was overestimating civic engagement. They completed 278 of these abbreviated interviews. Of those completing the longer survey, 64 percent indicated they have been involved in their community in the last five years. In the shorter interviews, 60 percent indicated such. From that, the researchers concluded that the length of the interview only inflates the activity percentages "by an extremely small amount. And it should be emphasized that this summary report is based upon those who completed the lengthier interview."

Focus groups: While Schuldt's Survey Research Office was conducting the survey, the project turned to Lipman Hearne, Inc., of Chicago to handle a series of focus groups in December 2000. The purpose was to conduct qualitative research to help identify the differences between individuals who are highly engaged and those who are not, and to help

identify methods for engaging Illinois citizens in volunteer activity. I worked with Donna Van de Water, vice president for research, to select the cities where the focus groups would gather and to determine the line of questioning the facilitator would follow. Ferrara, our project's associate director, assisted Van de Water in developing the questions to be asked of focus group participants. Lipman Hearne conducted seven focus groups in four locations: three with self-reported civically engaged individuals (one group each in Carbondale, Peoria, and Deerfield) and four with self-reported civically unengaged individuals (one group each in Carbondale, Peoria, Deerfield, and Chicago). The engaged individuals, all between the ages of 29 and 65, were screened to ensure that they had been involved in a civic activity, either alone or with others, provided a service for a group in the community, or tried to do something about a neighborhood or community issue or problem in the past year (other than a church-related issue or problem). They considered themselves to be somewhat or very active in the community. The unengaged individuals, all between the ages of 25 to 70, were screened to ensure that they had not been involved in any civic activity, either alone or with others, had not provided a service for a group in the community, and had not tried to do something about a neighborhood or community issue or problem in the past year (other than a church-related issue or problem). They considered themselves to be not very or not at all active in the community, although, as I explain in the analysis to follow, that proved not necessarily to be accurate when participants talked during the focus group conversations about their activity. All focus group participants worked full time or at least 20 hours per week. The discussion focused on three themes and built on the line of questioning used in the survey research:

1. Citizenship and community: how respondents describe their community and/or neighborhood as a place to live; what problems there are in the community; what it means to be a citizen in the community; how involved they are in the community.

2. Social networks: how respondents describe their social networks; solicitations from friends, relatives, and/or members of social networks to participate in volunteer or civic activities; awareness of leaders in the community, and their relationships with those individuals.
3. Civic involvement: how respondents describe their perceived impact on community; identification of the community issues or problems they have been involved with in the past year; motivation to stay involved; knowledge or skills that are useful for civic involvement.

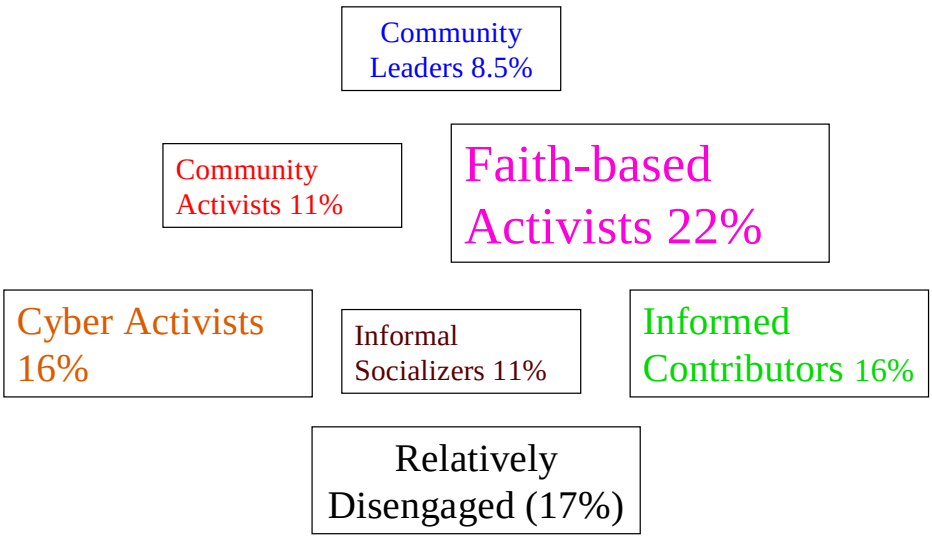
Strengths of our research: We make a significant contribution to the study of civic engagement by conducting a statewide survey, the first comprehensive statewide study of its kind. There is a growing body of national and regional and community-based research, and we hope that our study is the first of many statewide surveys so that state-level comparative data becomes available. At the same time, another strength of our work is that we repeated many questions that have been asked of national samples. Therefore, given the time, we are able to compare Illinois results on certain engagement activities to national and regional samples surveyed in recent decades.

A great strength of our study of civic engagement in Illinois is the variety of engagement activities identified in the questions. We ask about activities that have been on other surveys – many of those identified in my tables in Chapter 4, and we also include a variety of "new" kinds of activity that we believe have important consequences for the nature of civic engagement (depending upon one's definition of civic engagement). These new kinds of activity include listening to or participating in increasingly popular talk shows on radio and television, informal socializing, and technology-based activity.

Another strength is that we addressed areas that had been relatively neglected in the literature on participation and involvement. Research had focused on the public's interest and degree of activity and the demographic characteristics giving rise to this interest and activity. A neglected aspect had been looking for factors correlated with getting more people involved. This has to do with the issue of access to social capital. So we asked why people got involved, whether they had been recruited to get involved, and about their recruitment networks. We also asked respondents about their local communities to assess the extent to which the perceived characteristics of their communities supported or impeded their involvement.

Yet another strength of our project is found is one method of analysis. That is, we created a typology that contributes to the scholarship on civic engagement, as I mentioned in Chapter 4 (see Table 4.2). Schuldt found that many people fell rather naturally into certain categories because they specialized more than anyone else on one particular type of activity, such as political activity, religious activity, or technological activity. Schuldt, Ferrara and I met several times and at first identified about nine or 10 types of civic engagers. But upon further statistical analysis, Schuldt felt more comfortable with seven types, and these seven landed in our typology (Figure 6.1): civic leaders, community activists, faith-based activists, cyber activists, informed contributors (people who primarily pay attention to the news and donate money), informal socializers, and the relatively disengaged. Having seven types provides at least three services for other scholars. First, it reminds them of the benefits of casting a wide net in researching participation, so that they might also try to find and then organize all the ways that citizens are involved, and then determine what is important. Second, it gives them a typology against which they can make their own statistical comparisons,

Figure 6.1 Relative size of seven groups and levels of their participation in Illinois typology: (Schuldt, Ferrara, Wojcicki, and Hogan 2001)



The size of the boxes is proportional to the percentage of people in each of the seven groups in the typology of citizens as depicted in the Illinois Civic Engagement Project. Also, the boxes are stacked to show that only one group has an overall high level of participation, two groups have high-moderate levels, and three have moderate levels overall. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding differences. This is an adaptation of a slide created by Richard Schuldt for a presentation to participants at two conferences on the same day in Chicago: to the Illinois Association of School Boards and the Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research. November 16, 2001.

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because these seven types emanate from statistical analysis. And third, because the researchers (Schuldt, Ferrara, Wojcicki, and Hogan 2001) also found differences among the seven types by various demographics such as male vs. female and rural vs. urban, this typology gives other scholars yet additional foundations for comparisons.

Besides the typology, questions about access, and a survey instrument that cast a wide net, the focus groups added a qualitative dimension to our research. The focus groups supported the validity of the survey research by confirming that people in Illinois are indeed engaged in their communities in many ways. In fact, I would argue that the level of

engagement in Illinois is higher than what was reported on the survey research, because in the focus groups in several locations, participants who attended the session for self-reported "unengaged" citizens told stories about significant interaction and involvement in their communities. Many people who labeled themselves in a pre-screening interview as uninvolved proved to be "engaged" by anyone's definition of civic engagement.

The limitations of our research. One of the biggest limitations with the survey research has to do with its sample. Because we wanted a statewide study and had a limit on the total number we could survey, we lack the ability to generalize to minority groups other than African-Americans. And even for African-Americans, we knew that further demographic breakdowns of them (by such characteristics as age, level of education, or income) would not be valid. For minority groups other than African-Americans (for instance, Hispanics), our final sample under-represented them, even when weighting is done.

Other limitations are related to how we measured several concepts in this study. For instance, in the measurement of the number of local organizations to which respondents volunteered and belonged, we asked whether respondents belonged to various specific types of organizations. Thus, those who volunteered – or belonged to – more than one organization of a given type are undercounted, and as I pointed out in Chapter 4, this has been a criticism of survey research on civic engagement. We believe this was alleviated, at least to some extent, by asking a question about volunteering to – or belonging to – an "other" organization, thus allowing respondents to identify organizations important to them.

We also believe that how we measured the level of activity in some of the areas – such as technology-based activity and informal socializing, for example – need more work. Much of the needed work is no doubt conceptual, perhaps even theoretical, in nature; more specifically, we need to think about how activity in these areas does relate, *and can relate*, to civic

engagement. The same is true for some specific activities within the broad categories, such as talk-show activity within the area of news exposure. Still another limitation is that we focused on the quantity of activities identified and, when we could, on the amount of activity expended. We did not measure the quality of the activity or its effect on the community. Another limitation relates to the part of the questionnaire we had to drop because of the length of the interview. This part was a section about civic skills.

Finally, although we did ask some questions about perceptions of community and motivations and barriers to involvement, we focused on *activities* more than *attitudes*. That decision was consistent with our desire to conduct a benchmark survey on civic engagement in Illinois, which by definition means activities. Also, the survey was already stretching the limits of a tolerable length, and in the end, we were trimming sections and cutting questions that could and should be topics on future research at the statewide level.

My second hypothesis says that our research in Illinois illustrates the benefit of a broader conceptualization of civic engagement. I test the hypothesis in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

TESTING TWO HYPOTHESES

The study of civic engagement in the United States dates at least to Tocqueville's (2000) classic work, *Democracy in America*, which he published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840. Robert Putnam (1995) reinvigorated the research and public debate with the publication of "Bowling Alone" in the *Journal of Democracy* in 1995 and his subsequent book, *Bowling Alone*, in 2000, and with speeches and seminars between 1995 and 2000 (Putnam 2000b, Saguaro Seminar 2001a). He claimed that "social capital" is on the decline in America, and that could be problematic for the American form of democracy. Many journalists and scholars picked up on Putnam's metaphor that more Americans are bowling, but fewer are bowling in leagues – hence, they are bowling alone. From a scholarly standpoint, Putnam entered an arena in which Almond and Verba (1963) and Verba and Nie (1972) and others had been asking questions for decades. Those early questions asked about the effects of citizen participation on democracy. Meanwhile, deliberations about the importance of another concept, "civil society," dotted the literature in studies not only about the United States, but also about many many

nations. E.J. Dionne (1997) summarized the overarching question for everybody in a *Brookings Review* article that carried the headline, "Why Civil Society? Why Now?"

Those questions point to one of the great challenges of this thesis. That is, most practitioners approach this topic of citizen participation from a pragmatic standpoint, and many scholars strive to help them. They want to know what action they can take to get more people involved in organizations, politics, or their community. They want to answer the question, "What works?" They evidently want assurances that getting more people involved is the right thing to do. The reason that line of inquiry presents a challenge is that this thesis does not ask that fundamental question. It does not intend to. Instead, this research focuses on the scholarship of civic engagement itself. It examines how scholars approach the topic of citizen participation, because, as it turns out, they approach the topic so differently, and the differences are subtle enough to produce confusion.

One of the important findings of this thesis is that some scholars use the terms civic engagement, social capital, and civil society in different ways, sometimes interchangeably – as if to say that statements such as "Social capital is on the decline" and "Civic engagement is on the decline" have the same meaning. But they do not. So after a careful review of the literature, I offer operational definitions of those terms. **Civil society** is the *network of ties and groups* through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs. **Social capital** is the *resource*, or collective power, emanating from connections among individuals, from social networks, and from social trust, norms, and the threat of sanctions, that people can draw upon to solve common problems. **Civic engagement** consists of the *specific organized and informal activities* through which individuals get drawn into community and political affairs. Using these definitions makes it clear that they are distinct and different terms and concepts.

Besides having definitional problems, the scholarship of civic engagement also has conceptual problems. Civic engagement generally means activities, involvement, or participation, but researchers differ considerably about what "participation" means. An analysis of the literature and a deeper analysis of three survey research instruments – Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995); the Putnam survey (Saguaro Seminar 2001a); and the Pew study (Campaign Study Group 2001) – demonstrate that scholars employ dozens of variables singly or in multiple combinations when they study civic engagement. And many studies go beyond "activities" and include attitudinal variables such as efficacy and/or trust or aggregate variables such as social capital. Scholars continue to differ on what sets of specific activities and attitudes have the most significant effect on community building and democratization. So they should continue to search for a consensus, model, or index that indicates what variables are most significant. Such a model would incorporate many variables related to community building and democratization. At present, there is no generally accepted cohesive model or index, although several have been attempted.

Survey research seems to be the method of research employed most frequently, at least by political scientists, to study citizen participation. But some scholars have shown the benefits of finding additional data and trends with meta-analyses, ethnographies, and case studies. So the methodology for studying civic engagement, a mega-disciplinary topic of study, will have to broaden as scholars search for greater understanding about the effects and importance of participation. The theoretical development will have to continue.

Researchers often enter this arena with at least two general assumptions: (1) citizen participation makes communities better, and (2) citizen attitudes affect their participation and the health and strength of communities and democratic institutions. So they study both citizen attitudes and behaviors, as if both have a similar effect. This may be a mistaken

conceptualization. It might seem reasonable for political scientists who study communities and democratization to assume that attitudes and activities have similar effects on political institutions, but that assumption might be less reasonable to psychologists, who are likely to delve deeper into questions about social trust and citizens' attitudes about their communities. Political psychology is a subfield unto itself, and political scientists must be careful not to make assumptions too quickly about the psychological attributes of citizens they are studying. So there is value in separating attitudes from behavior in the research, as I have done in this thesis. In their hunt for a comprehensive model of civic engagement, scholars will have to be on parallel paths and separate paths at the same time in studying activities and attitudes.

With those conclusions in mind, I turn again to my two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Inconsistent definitions and inconsistent conceptualization and subsequent model construction lead to conflicting conclusions in recent research on civic engagement. Clearer definitions and a more comprehensive, integrated conceptualization of civic engagement are needed to guide future research.* This thesis shows, first of all, that scholars use different operational definitions of social capital and civic engagement. It also shows that the related term, "civil society," is used far more than social capital or civic engagement, yet all three terms are intertwined and intermingled in the literature, to the point of lack of clarity about their precise meanings. That is why this thesis suggests operational definitions of those concepts. Researchers conceptualize and operationalize participation in many different ways – drawing upon a sampling of variables from many dozens available to them. Their utilization of variables, their methodologies, and their assumptions lead them to different conclusions. Education, for example, is often found to be the most important predictor of participation, but it is not always the most significant variable affecting citizen involvement. Also, education as an independent variable may have only a relative value, or diminishing

returns to a community, when civic engagement is the dependent variable. This is especially so when scholars look at aggregate levels of education in a finite geographic region. Also, some scholars conclude social capital is declining, while others insist it is not – often while analyzing the same data sources. And some write about a decline in social capital when they are actually talking about a decline in civic engagement activities. Some say more participation is correlated with stronger democracies; others find that democracy is, instead, a *product* of participation. Still others find correlations going in both directions. Some find trust to be an independent variable; others find it to be an intervening variable; still others find it to be a dependent variable or not significantly related to democratization. Meanwhile, scholars try to explain reasons for involvement by examining human nature and asking philosophical questions. Some see value in the rational actor theory, while others shy away from that and assume that people are naturally capable of behaving altruistically. That philosophical disagreement is a major example of a difference in conceptualization. So this hypothesis about inconsistent conclusions emanating from inconsistent definitions and conceptualization is confirmed.

My fundamental question in this thesis sounds clear, but the answer is fuzzy, as I predicted. The question: What is the study of civic engagement or citizen engagement? The answer: It depends, because a comprehensive model or index that identifies and maps the most significant variables affecting civic engagement does not exist.

Hypothesis 2: *The case study report, "Profile of Illinois: An Engaged State," illustrates the benefit of a broad conceptualization of civic engagement.* The Illinois Civic Engagement Project produced that report and conducted the benchmark survey of civic engagement in Illinois. This is the first known comprehensive statewide study of civic engagement in any state. It provides a broad conceptualization by casting a wide net and

looking at a variety of ways that citizens participate, including "informal socializing," because we wanted to look for *all* possible ways that citizens interact and connect, leaving it to future studies to analyze more carefully which variables are most important, and why. A scholar at the Harwood Institute, which studies and promotes civic involvement, says that our research is "ahead of the curve" due to its breadth and the depth that we go in certain areas, such as the faith-based activities and informal socializing (Moore 2001). We contribute to the scholarship by providing benchmark data on numerous ways that Illinois citizens are involved. Our research consisted of survey research and focus groups and is a case study because it looked at only one state. There is no empirical evidence that studying civic engagement state by state will reveal significant differences, but comparative state government is a longstanding subfield in political science, and so it makes sense to start looking at civic engagement from this perspective. Future researchers who are interested in Illinoisans' levels and forms of participation could go to our research first and then go deeper into particular activities or look for trends and comparisons. Our typology with seven types of "engagers" contributes to the scholarship in yet another way by providing a model for looking at ways that citizens participate in a multitude of ways. Just as important, we identified citizens' major motivations for and barriers to engagement. A discussion of barriers is important to a theoretical development that emphasizes the importance not only of social networks, but also the *access* that citizens have to those networks. Access is likely to be of continuing and growing importance as civic engagement projects flourish and activists seek effective, efficient ways to influence democratic processes. These aspects of our Illinois study are benefits of a broad conceptualization of the study of civic engagement; so this hypothesis is also confirmed.

Unsettled questions and topics for future research

In addition to confirming both hypotheses, this thesis examines other questions and could ask many more in an attempt to bring clarity to the scholarship of civic engagement. I conclude with a series of questions that scholars could ask to advance the study of citizen participation and why and how it is important for the future of American democracy.

- Is civic engagement on the decline, or, is Skocpol (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999, 2) correct that civil society is in the midst of reinventing itself?
- Is there a level of civic engagement that is optimal for a strong and healthy democracy? Is there any point of diminishing returns?
- Is citizen participation a cause of democratization or a product of it?
- At what point, if any, does a regional increase in education level stop showing a corresponding increase in civic engagement?
- How important are the variables of trust, social trust, and interpersonal trust in this discussion? Is trust an independent, intervening, or dependent variable in relationship to the health of communities?
- How do we account for simultaneous trust, distrust, and perpetual conflict in a democratic society, when it "sounds right" for politicians and practitioners to plead for a more harmonious society?
- Since scholars have such a fascination with citizens' use of the Internet and e-mail to get information and connect with one another, why are they not interested in citizens' use of the telephone and the U.S. mail to get information and connect with one another?
- Can we predict who will face the most barriers to participation? How do such barriers limit their role in a democracy?

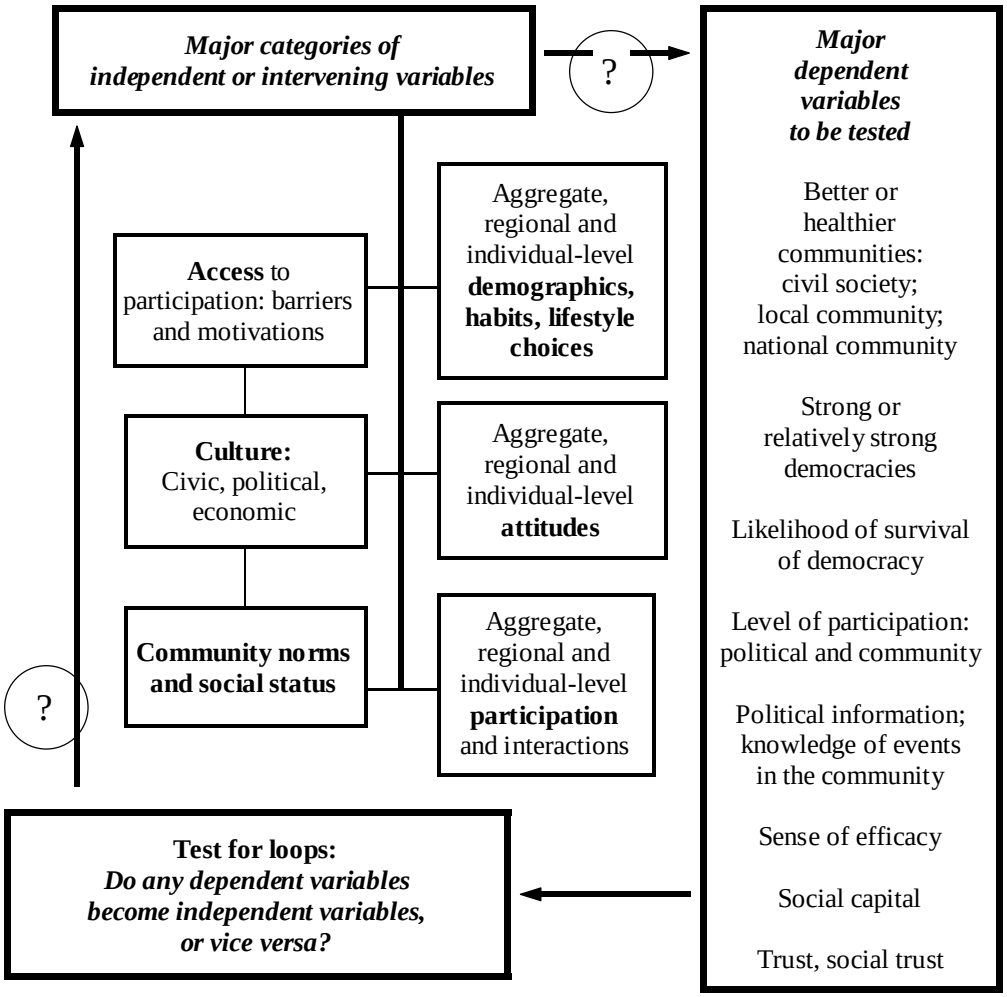
- What are the roles of philosophy and an examination of the nature of human beings in this discussion? Do people act naturally out of self-interest? Do they also have some interest in the common good naturally? If the answer to both is yes, then what?

Conclusion: an emerging paradigm?

Scholars' interest in citizen participation is as earnest today as it was when Tocqueville wrote his classic work about American democracy. The research questions have become more complex, but overall, the evidence seems less conclusive now about how and why citizens' personal interactions and social networks are good for democracy. One explanation for the remarkable inconsistency in findings about civic engagement might be that a paradigm shift is taking place in society. The old Tocquevillian and Putnam paradigm emphasizes formal, stable, place-based organizations, institutions, employers, and nation-states. A newer, emerging paradigm might be a world dominated more by market-based institutions and by what Wuthnow (1998) calls "porous institutions," in which citizens move often from one group to the next, from one job to the next, and from one city to the next. In this paradigm, citizen action and organizations still matter, but citizens are less likely to have permanent memberships or long-term commitments. Instead, as the AARP study and our Illinois civic engagement study suggest, citizens are likely to get involved and interact in specialized ways. So the hallmarks of the new paradigm could be porous institutions and civic freelancers. This is an explanation that needs to be tested. If a paradigm shift resulting from great socioeconomic changes is indeed taking place and old institutions are giving way to new forms of interaction and associations, then scholars might be getting conflicting answers to questions about civic engagement because a Tocquevillian or quasi-Tocquevillian conceptualization of society no longer holds.

To explain more conclusively the benefit of citizen participation to democracies in a changing world structure, scholars should search for a model that defines and identifies more clearly which citizen activities and attitudes are correlated with strong communities and healthy democracies. Such a model would include many variables, and it would attempt to map many complex relationships among the many variables I have identified in this thesis. Figure 7.1 (see next page) shows how complex this model or map could become. There are almost too many variables to consider in a single model; yet, how valuable such a mapping of the dynamics of civic engagement would be. Recall that after 30 years of debate about Almond and Verba's "civic culture" concept, Laitin (1995) wrote that "conceptual clarity" had yet to be achieved, and "there was little policing by the scientific community to demand sharper specifications" about links between citizen participation, culture, and political structures. That problem remains. Unless researchers achieve consensus about fundamental definitions, a paradigm, and the direction of correlations in a comprehensive model of civic engagement, an absence of clarity about the importance of civic engagement is likely to continue.

Figure 7.1 **Potential components and variables in a comprehensive model of civic engagement, and correlations that need to be tested**



This table summarizes the complex ways that variables can or should be studied in analyses of civic engagement and social capital. It shows that some variables might be independent, dependent, or intervening variables. *(Figure 7.1 revised 12/5/01)*

Illustration by Ed Wojcicki

Afterword

BECOME A "SEPTEMBER 11 VOLUNTEER"

This brief afterword is not a formal part of my research, but I cannot conclude my thesis on citizen participation without mentioning the events of September 11, 2001 – the day two jets crashed into the World Trade Center in New York, resulting in the deaths of thousands of people. It is now just two months later. The words "September 11" already have become a shorthand term to identify the devastating events. The conventional wisdom is that American society has changed forever.

If that is so – and it's far too early to tell – then September 11 could have a major impact on civic engagement in the United States. Since September 11, Americans have donated or pledged more than a billion dollars for relief efforts and victims. Many have donated blood to the Red Cross, and so many people went to New York City that officials had to make a polite national plea for no more volunteers. President George W. Bush's approval rating just after September 11 was the highest such presidential rating in history, according George Gallup, Jr., (2001). In his third major televised address to the nation since September 11, President Bush asked Americans to "become 'September 11th volunteers'" (Bush 2001, Ross

2001). The president encouraged Americans to support one another in new ways, especially as volunteers to help people in need.

I raise these points because I drafted most of this thesis in a pre-September 11 world. But recent events evidently have affected Americans' willingness to volunteer and contribute money, and they have deeply affected Americans' opinion of the president's performance. So scholars have a new set of challenges in their study of civic engagement, but it is too early to know precisely how they will develop any "September 11" factors in their research. Will there be an unusual adjustment or a spike in involvement or trends in September 2001? What kinds of participation? September 11 might prove to be a watershed event that abruptly and permanently affects how Americans think and how they participate. So September 11 might become yet another variable in the scholarship of civic engagement.

November 10, 2001

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