Connecting, Trusting, and Participating: The Direct and Interactive Effects of Social Associations

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In recent years, research has come to recognize that nonpolitical associations have unintended but important consequences for citizens' participation in public affairs. Scholars theorize that these associational activities—embedded within social networks and sustained by confidence in the motives of others—encourage and facilitate participation in civic life. This study tests and broadens these theses by (1) assessing the relative impact of different types of associational activities (i.e., informal socializing, public attendance, and religious participation) and (2) examining interactive relationships between these activities and generalized interpersonal trust. Findings show that all of these associational activities significantly contribute to civic engagement. Furthermore, all three interactions between the social associations and social trust are significant, indicating that those involved in associational activities are even more likely to become civic participants when they hold trusting attitudes toward others.

> Members of Florentine choral societies participate because they like to sing, not because their participation strengthens the Tuscan social fabric. But, it does. (Putnam 1993a: 38).

Scholars from diverse disciplines have long emphasized the importance of engagement in public life—voting, volunteerism, involvement in community projects, and other such civic affiliations—for the health of democratic societies (Bellah et al. 1985; Tocqueville 1969/1835; Tönnies 1940; Wilson 2000). Accordingly, efforts have been made to identify factors that increase political participation and otherwise enhance civic engagement. Much of this research has relied on the explanatory power of individual-level differences in socioeconomic status, political orientations, and psychological dispositions (for review, see Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

This focus on micro-individual characteristics has had the unfortunate consequence of leaving the role of meso-social connections largely uncovered until recent years. Interest in the civic consequences of community context and associational network variables has grown markedly in the wake of Putnam's (1993b, 2000) reflections on America's declining stock of *social capital*; much of the recent research confirms the longstanding contention of many theorists that these linkages are critical for drawing people in civic life (Coleman 1990; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Tönnies 1940, Verba et al. 1995). We acknowledge the importance of meso-social variables as preconditions for civic mobilization, but further argue that these variables and micro-individual variables work in concert to foster civic engagement. In the present study, we focus on the interplay between interpersonal trust and various social associations.

Our contention that social associations are significant conduits for civic participation is consistent with a perspective that regards participation in civic life as a "by-product of activities engaged in for other purposes" (Coleman 1990: 312). Coleman's envisioning of social capital as an unintended consequence of other activities matches well with Putnam's (1993a) initial findings concerning civic participation in Italian communities. Choral societies are not alone in their ability to strengthen community: various types of social affiliations—e.g., religious attendance, recreational and cultural activities, even informal social interactions—may be consequential for political participation, writ large, because they are settings for political discussion and mobilization (Putnam 1995a, 1995b) and resource- and community-building (Davidson and Cotter 1989; Verba et al. 1995). Moreover, networks of association, both formal and informal, may work with trust in others to further encourage engagement in public life, for trusting attitudes ease suspicion about the motives of others and reduce concerns about reciprocity, increasing the likelihood that social ties produce civic engagement (Fukuyama 1995).

In sum, this research tests whether individuals' involvement in diverse social activities—ranging from religious attendance to informal socializing—contributes to participation in volunteer activities and community projects. Further, we examine the interactive effects of social associations with generalized trust, since one's sense of trust may influence reactions to mobilizing information, decisions about civic recruitment, and attachment to the community (Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990; Liu et al.1998).

Associational Membership and Political Participation

Research contends that associational membership facilitates individuals' involvement in public affairs (Flap 1999;

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Pollock 1982; Putnam 1993a). Given the non-political nature of many associations, such as religious and recreational groups, scholars have focused much of their attention on the question of how associations go beyond their original goals and functions to foster political participation.

A number of explanations have emerged for the link between associational membership and political participation. Research has shown that associational life, in part, mobilizes members by functioning as a context in which various democratic virtues are enhanced. In particular, group activities and political discussion among members may broaden individuals' interest and concerns, making public affairs and political issues more salient (Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990; Olsen 1972; Peterson 1992; Rogers, Bultena, and Barb 1975; Stolle 1998).

Moreover, active recruitment into political activities is thought to occur in social associations. Contact with others, especially those from different backgrounds, increases the possibility of being drawn into activities outside the group (Liu et al. 1998; Olsen 1972). While there is variation across organizations, findings indicate that associations serve as conduits for entry into civic and political activity, which is independent of the impact of key demographic and attitudinal variables (Verba et al. 1995).

Involvement in associational activities also provides opportunities to develop individual-level resources necessary to participate in political settings. Olsen (1972) and others (Liu et al. 1998; Peterson 1992; Sherkat and Ellison 1999) have theorized that group memberships, particularly those that are church-based, provide leadership skills and other resources needed for effective political action. Likewise, Verba et al. (1995) contend that non-political associations often offer opportunities for individuals to acquire, maintain, or improve civic skills—e.g., writing letters, taking part in decisions, planning or chairing meetings, and giving presentations.

Finally, it has been suggested that part of the process by which voluntary associations encourage individuals' involvement in public life is by cultivating "community attachment" (Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996), "belonging" (Cassel 1999), or "group identity" (Peterson 1992). Development of this "sense of community" is important because those with stronger psychological ties to their communities are more active in civic life (Davidson and Cotter 1989; Unger and Wandersman 1985). Research has shown that participation in church and other non-political organizations indeed enhances individuals' psychological attachment to their communities (Liu et al. 1998).

Informal Social Associations and Civic Engagement

While past research has consistently demonstrated the significance of non-political associational membership in public affairs, it should be noted that the research has mostly focused on traditional forms of political participation, such as electoral turnout and other campaign activities (Cassel 1999; Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990; Olsen 1972; Peterson 1992; Pollock 1982; Rogers, Bultena, and Barb 1975). Some scholars, however, have demonstrated that associational experiences may have a greater impact on *cooperative* activities than traditional, *individualized* political participation (Verba et al. 1995; also see Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Smidt 1999). For example, associational membership has been found to relate more strongly to time-based, cooperative acts, such as community work, than traditional forms of political involvement, such as voting and campaign contributions (Verba et al. 1995). As these findings suggest, it is important to investigate systematically how associational activities are related to collective action.

Further, with a few exceptions (e.g., La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Wilson and Musick 1998), past studies have focused primarily on the functions of *formal* associations, paying little attention to the contributions of *informal* social associations to civic engagement. While formal organizations are easier to observe and analyze, loose and amorphous networks of individuals who come together on a casual basis and at irregular times for leisure activities and socializing may be no less important than formal ones (Newton 1999). Indeed, scholars have found that informal associations generate democratic values (Gundelach and Torpe 1996) and facilitate political action (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992). To be clear, this perspective does not assert that informal associations replace the functions performed by formal associations, but instead posits that informal associations have consequences for collective action that parallel and perhaps complement those found for formal associations.

One advantage of informal associations, however, may be revealed in their horizontal structure, which contrasts sharply with the vertical structure of many formal associations (Newton 1997). For Putnam (1993b), it is horizontal networks that produce the virtues of social capital, including cooperative actions, because they manifest communications that are candid and crosscutting. As this suggests, the familiarity and equity that characterize informal associations likely encourage open interactions (Newton 1997), thereby causing individuals to be receptive to information and opportunities that arise out of these forms of social connection.

Types of Social Associations

Due to the predominant focus of past research on formal organizations, categories of social associations—particularly informal ones—are not specified in the literature. Thus, for the purposes of this study, we incorporated three types of associational activities: religious attendance, public attendance, and informal socializing. The latter two types of social association represent individuals' experiences that informally connect them to an outer society, either interpersonally or contextually. Though apolitical, each of these three types of social association is expected to foster individuals' engagement with civic and community activities.

The role of church in promoting community and voluntary activities has generated much attention from researchers in recent years (Greeley 1997a 1997b; Liu et al. 1998; Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Smidt 1999; Verba et al.

1995). Various civic functions performed by formal associations are applicable to church life (Cassel 1999; Liu et al. 1999; Peterson 1992; Smidt 1999; Olsen 1972; Verba et al. 1995). However, religious participation is unique from other institutional ties in two respects that strengthen its civic significance: (1) it explicitly emphasizes connectedness to those in need located outside of the organization (Greeley 1997b; Liu et al. 1998; Smidt 1999), and (2) it frequently connects its members to opportunities for working for social good and collective benefits (Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Smidt 1999).

Public attendance—attending lectures and exhibits or visiting libraries—may not feature these same mobilizing conditions, yet activities that involve individuals in public events or situate them in public spaces may encourage some recognition of the value of a larger community and reinforce a sense of belonging to that community. In addition, they may observe community-building efforts by other people in these contexts. Thus, when community needs and opportunities arise, individuals who have experienced public events and spaces may be more likely to respond. Berkowitz (1996) echoes this theme when discussing how to sustain community; he notes that one way to promote community attachment, solidarity, pride, and unity is to advance activities that bring people together and unify them. Accordingly, having shared experiences and utilizing public facilities may lay a foundation on which collective action can grow.

Finally, while some downplay the significance of informal socializing in advancing civic virtues because of the homogeneous nature of participants (Stolle 1998; also see Olsen 1972), community psychologists have long emphasized the importance of informal socializing among neighbors for community engagement (Berkowitz 1996). Termed "neighboring," social interactions among nearby residents have been found to strengthen the affective attachment to these others and the community at large (Unger and Wandersman 1985). Furthermore, informal socializing has been shown to help individuals respond to community needs and problems by facilitating participation in neighborhood meetings (Wandersman and Giamartino 1980) and enhancing efficacy on neighborhood issues (Chavis and Wandersman 1990). Indeed, when the frequency of interaction with friends and neighbors was used as a measure of informal socializing, it was found to be related to volunteering, even after controlling for formal associational activities (Booth and Babchuk 1973; Wilson and Musick 1998).

GENERALIZED TRUST AS A CIVIC CATALYST

Individuals' sense of trust toward people with whom they have only little or no direct interactions (also known as generalized trust or social trust) has been found to contribute to collective action (Putnam 2000; Stolle 2001). Scholars contend that this core belief eases suspicion about the motives of others and reduces concerns about free-riding—both key factors in decisions to participate collectively (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 2000; Uslaner 1998). Accordingly, research has focused on the role generalized trust plays as a direct cause of participation in community affairs and its causal antecedents (e.g., Uslaner 1998).

We, however, attend to another route by which trust contributes to civic engagement: trust may function as a contributory factor—or a catalyst—that strengthens the linkage between social associations and civic participation (Kwak, Shah, and Eveland 2002). We expect that those active in various non-political social settings should be even more likely to become civic participants when they hold trusting attitudes. That is, the belief that others are honest is likely to further encourage individuals to relate skills, resources, and experiences they obtain in associational activities to a larger society. In fact, generalized trust may matter in shaping civic consequences of various social associations precisely because of the fact that it is a foundational feature of a wide range of social judgments (Kramer, Brewer, and Hanna 1996).

Individuals who put greater trust in others may be more willing to respond to mobilizing information and to accept opportunities for recruitment into civic life (Fukuyama 1995; Uslaner 1998). Trusting attitudes also may be consequential for community attachment, since social mistrust likely leads to social withdrawal and erosion of community ties. Various personal resources and skills learned in associational life may be more likely to be put to use when people benefiting from such resources are viewed as being without vicious motives. In short, social associations by themselves are expected to be an important foundation for civic engagement, but their positive impact on participation in collective action efforts is expected to be even greater among those who believe that people are trustworthy.

METHOD

A secondary analysis of the 1997 DDB Life Styles Study was performed. The data were collected as part of an annual mail survey, conducted by Market Facts and funded by the DDB advertising agency. Initially, Market Facts acquires the names and addresses of a massive number of Americans from commercial list brokers. Via mail, large numbers of people from these lists are then asked to express their willingness to participate periodically to mail or telephone surveys, and if so, to provide basic demographic information. Demographically balanced samples by geographic region, family size, age, income, and population density to approximate distributions within census divisions are then drawn from among the 500,000+ people agreeing to become part of the pre-recruited "mail panel" for inclusion in the Life Style Survey (Groeneman 1994).

In an effort to achieve a balanced final sample, the starting sample of approximately 5,000 mail panelists is adjusted within the subcategories of race, gender, and marital status to compensate for expected differences in return rates. Weights are applied to match the demographic composition of the final sample target population (Putnam 2000). Moreover, the sample is drawn to approximate "actual distributions

within the nine Census divisions of household income, population density, panel member's age, and household size" (Groeneman 1994: 4). In 1997, of the roughly 5,000 mailed questionnaires distributed, 3,462 usable responses were returned, for a response rate of 69.2 percent.

This stratified quota sampling method differs markedly from more conventional probability sample procedures yet produces highly comparable data. Putnam, who used 1975 to 1998 Life Style Studies as the primary data for his book *Bowling Alone*, took great care to validate these data against the General Social Survey and Roper Poll (Putnam 2000). This validation involved longitudinal and cross-sectional comparisons of parallel questions found in the Life Style Studies and conventional samples. He concludes that there are "surprisingly few differences between the two approaches" with the mail panel approach producing data that is "consistent with other modes of measurement" (Putnam 2000: 422-24; see also Groeneman 1994).

Measures

Civic Participation. Civic participation, which refers to participation in civic and community activities, was measured by two behavioral items; an additive index was created by summing the scores from these measures (inter-item correlation = .49). Respondents were asked to report how frequently they participated in the following activities in the past year: 'did volunteer work' and 'worked on a community project.' Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 'none in the past year' to '52+ times' (see Appendix A for complete question wording).

Social Associations. Three types of social associations were included in this analysis. A factor analysis with Oblimin rotation uncovered two underlying factors among seven items of informal activities (see Appendix B); two informal social association variables were created on the basis of factor scores computed by regression method: *informal socializing* and *public attendance*. Informal socializing represents such activities as visiting friends, giving or attending a dinner party, and entertaining people at home. Public attendance includes visiting an art gallery or museum, attending a lecture, going to a public library, and visiting a zoo. Respondents were asked on a seven-point scale how many times in the past 12 months they had engaged in each activity, with possible responses ranging from 'none in the past year' to '52+ times.'[1]

Finally, a single measure of *religious attendance* was included as a measure of a more traditional form of social activity. This measure was based upon frequency of church (or other house of worship) attendance in the last 12 months, with responses ranging from 'none in the past year' to '52+ times.'

Interpersonal Trust. Interpersonal trust was measured by asking to what extent respondents agreed with an evaluative statement, 'Most people are honest (Putnam 2000; Shah 1998).' Responses were recorded on a six-point scale that ranged from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree,' without a neutral category.

Demographic and Contextual Variables. A standard set of demographic variables was included in this analysis: *age*, *education*, *household income*, and *sex*.

In addition to these controls, this study included two contextual variables that were expected to have an influence on civic participation: *own home* and *population density*. Own home is a single dichotomous measure, with respondents marking presently owning a home coded high. DiPasquale and Glaeser (1999) find that the economic incentives that come with owning a home lead to greater involvement in community affairs. Population density is measured by a single seven-point scale ranging from a 'non-metropolitan statistical area' to '2,000,000 + people.' The population density of one's city of residence repeatedly has been found to influence involvement in civic activities; the larger the city, the less likely residents are to have a strong sense of community and the more likely they are to be anonymous, thereby resulting in less opportunity for recruitment in civic volunteerism (Fischer 1982; Shah 1998; Verba et al. 1995).

Attitudinal and Personality Variables. *Charity ethic* and *extroversion*, each theorized to have a unique impact on civic participation, were employed in this study. Charity ethic refers to one's attitude toward charitable giving. Evidence suggests that charitable giving is often motivated by empathy for others and recognition of their need for special help or care; thus, contribution to charity is an expression of sociotropic concerns (Radley and Kennedy 1995). One's motivation to advance the public good should be associated with a greater likelihood of being involved in civic activities. Charity ethic was measured by respondents' response to a single statement, 'I make a special effort to buy from companies that support charitable causes.'[2]

Given that both civic participation and association measures have a behavioral component, it may be a legitimate concern that some type of behavioral disposition or a taste for participation (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995) spuriously causes civic participation and social associations to co-vary. We included a personality characteristic, *extrovert*, which by itself may cause individuals behaviorally active and energetic in various domains. Extrovert was measured by the degree of respondents' agreement with the following statements, "I am a homebody" and "I guess I'm what you would call a couch potato," on a six-point scale, ranging from definitely disagree to definitely agree. Responses to both statements were reverse-coded, and an additive index was created (inter-item correlation = .23).

[1] The extent to which respondents socialize with friends (i.e., visiting friends), however, was measured by respondents' agreement with a statement, "I spend a lot of time visiting friends," on a six-point scale, ranging from definitely disagree to definitely agree.

[2] Although this operationalization has face validity, it may lack content validity, because it taps individuals' disposition toward charitable giving only in the context of product purchasing.

Media Use. A measure of *local media use* was also utilized for this study. Past studies have found that the consumption of local news in the media significantly contributes to participation in community affairs (Kang and Kwak 2003; McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999). Dichotomous measures of local newspaper and television news use were introduced into an additive scale to create this variable. Respondents were asked which of the following newspaper sections they read "all or most" of the time: news, business, life style, and editorial. An additive index was created from these four newspaper use variables (Cronbach α = .73). Respondents were also asked whether they watch local television news. The composite index of local newspaper news use and the single measure of local television news use were equally weighted and then summed (inter-item correlation = .22).[3]

Finally, a single measure of *total television viewing* was also included. Past studies have pointed to a negative role of accumulated time spent watching television, because it tends to reduce time available for civic action and/or to cultivate the image of a society untrustworthy and thus unworthy for cooperative activities (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Putnam 1995b). The total television viewing variable used in this analysis was created by summing individuals' reported viewing of 20 half-hour long programs (each given a value of .5), 23 hour-long programs (each given a value of 1), and 8 two-hour long programs (each given a value of 2). Thus, the resultant index reflects the amount of viewing of a variety of individually recognized programs. Scores on this index ranged from 0 to 44, with a mean value of 11.4.

Interaction Terms. In order to test whether generalized trust moderates the effects of social associations on civic participation—so that the interactive effect of trust and each social association variable on civic participation becomes significant, above and beyond the direct impact of each association variable—multiplicative interaction terms between trust and each of three social association variables were created. To reduce potential problems with multicollinearity between interaction terms and their components, all the component variables were standardized prior to the formation of the interaction terms (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan 1990).[4]

RESULTS

In order to examine the relationship between collective action and social associations, a series of preliminary zero-order analyses were attempted. As shown in Table 1, all four forms of social association—informal socializing (r = .28), public attendance (r = .38), and religious attendance (r = .30)—were significantly related to participating in community projects and voluntary works.

TABLE 1
ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS—CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL ASSOCIATIONS

Social Associations	Civic Participation r (N)
Informal Socializing	.28*** (3,319)
Public Attendance	.38*** (3,319)
Church Attendance	.30*** (3,368)

Note: ***p < .001.

All the preliminary findings in Table 1 supported the expectations, but for us to be more confident with the contribution of social associations to civic participation, we need to perform a more stringent analysis where the impact of other variables that have been found to be significant exogenous factors of civic participation is considered. Thus, a hierarchical multiple regression was run, with all the control variables detailed in the methods section being entered as a control block.

Findings in Table 2 indicate that the majority of control variables included were significantly related to the criterion variable. More specifically, those who were older, female, more educated, and residents of smaller towns tended to be participants in civic activities. Also, those who demonstrated greater tendency to support charitable causes, scored higher on the extrovert measure, and frequently used local news were more likely to be civically connected to their community. Finally, interpersonal trust was significantly related to collective action. As a block, control variables accounted for 12.1 percent of the variance in civic participation, and all of those variables remained significant in the final equation.

The bottom right panel of Table 2 shows how three social association measures related to participating in collective activities after the controls. While there was an overall decrease in size of coefficients, all three measures of social associations remained significant after the control. Those who spent more time socializing with other people, by visiting or inviting, were more likely to participate in volunteer and community projects. Participation in various public events and attending public places were also found to contribute to producing community members who responded to community needs. Consistent with past findings, churchgoing was found to be more than worshiping, given that church was found to encourage individuals' attending to community-at-large matters. Overall, after the controls social association variables accounted for 14.5 percent of the variance in civic participation.

In Table 3, we tested whether individuals' trust in other people helped those engaged in social associations to

[3] Because four newspaper use measures were used, the composite measure for newspaper news use was divided by four and then added to the television news use measure. This approach allows this study to treat equally news use across the two media forms

[4] Without a proper transformation of variables, such as standardizing and centering, coefficients for interaction terms tend to be inflated in size due to their high correlation with component variables, thereby making it difficult to interpret the findings. In order to guard against this problem, this study takes the standardization method (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan 1990). This method, while addressing the multicollinearity problem, does not affect significance tests. See Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990) for detailed discussion on this issue.

TABLE 2
INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL ASSOCIATIONS ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

	Beta (β)	t-statistic	Beta (β)	t-statistic
Control Variables				
Age	.12***	6.03	.11***	6.32
Sex (female = high)	.12***	6.95	.06***	3.71
Education	.19***	10.15	.07***	3.89
Income	.00	.08	−.03	−1.34
Own Home	.03	1.70	.03	1.55
Population density	−.06**	−3.36	−.05**	−3.09
Charity ethic	.12***	7.09	.07***	4.20
Extroversion	.11***	6.39	.04*	2.31
Local News Use	.07**	3.48	.04*	2.21
Total Television Use	−.03	−1.83	−.03	−1.75
Interpersonal Trust	.07***	3.83	.03*	2.07
Social Association				
Informal Socializing			.15***	8.93
Public Attendance			.29***	16.42
Church Attendance			.18***	11.06
Incr. R^2 (percentage)	12.1%***		14.5%***	
Final R^2 (percentage)			26.6%***	

Notes: β's refer to standardized regression coefficients.
N = 3,108. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

become even more participating in civic action. Analytically, we expected social association measures to positively interact with trust so that the influence of social associations on civic participation would be greater for those who were higher on the trust item. Findings supported this expectation, as all three interaction terms were significant and positive at $p < .05$ level. Associational activities themselves tended to lead participants to cooperatively engage in common problems in community, but the significant interaction effects indicate that individuals' generalized trust in others was more likely to facilitate this process. As shown in Table 3, those who interact with others in informal settings, attend public events and places, and go to church were more likely to engage in civic activities when they had greater confidence in others' honesty, as compared to other participants in these social associations who had lesser degree of trust in others.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that various forms of social associations contribute to participation in collective action. The social associations examined in this study, ranging from the formal ties of religious attendance to informal socializing, were all found to make a strong contribution to individuals' community participation. In short, as Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993a), among others, have argued, social capital appears to be produced as an unintended consequence of a host of social activities.

At the general level, these findings are consistent with prior observations that non-political *formal* associations function as an important channel by which citizens' traditional involvement in politics is increased (e.g., Cassel 1999; Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990). Most importantly, however, results presented in this study expand the discussion on the relationship between social associations and public affairs participation by showing that individuals' *informal* associations facilitate participation in *civic matters*, such as volunteering and engaging in community projects.

The role of informal associations in civic participation has been noted as an area in need of systematic research (Newton 1999), but the literature provides little guidance for what types of informal associations should be investigated in conjunction with collective participation. These data suggest that the full range of associational behaviors—varying in formality and structure—is consequential for civic participation. The factor analysis conducted in this study successfully identified two forms of informal associations, and each of these informal association variables—informal socializing and public attendance—made a significant and unique contribution to civic participation. While future studies must decide whether these measures of informal associations need to be further refined, it is certain that the current findings necessitate continuing research in this area.

Relying on the literature on formal associations, this study developed several assumptions regarding the processes by which informal associations facilitate individuals' commitment to collective problems. We expected that

TABLE 3
INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL ASSOCIATIONS AND TRUST ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

	Beta (β)	t-statistic
Prior blocks (R^2: percentage)	26.6%***	
Interaction Variables		
Informal Socializing × Interpersonal Trust	.04*	2.34
Public Attendance × Interpersonal Trust	.04*	2.50
Church Attendance × Interpersonal Trust	.05**	3.08
Final R^2 (percentage)	27.0***	

Notes: N = 3,108 *p < .05; **p < .01. Equation controls for age, sex, education, income, own home, population density, charity ethic, extroversion, local news use, total television use, interpersonal trust, informal socializing, public attendance, and church attendance.

informal associations should play a role in mobilizing, recruiting, and enhancing a sense of community, and to a lesser degree, building personal resources. However, many of those assumptions are yet to be empirically examined. In particular, given the strong contribution of public attendance, it is important and promising for future studies to further analyze to what extent individuals' experiencing public events, activities, and places enhances community self-esteem, a sense of belonging, community pride, and solidarity (Berkowitz 1996).

Findings of this study also demonstrate that trusting attitudes moderate the influence of social associations on collective action. That is, the contribution of social associations to civic participation was not equivalent across all individuals. Rather, people who hold trusting attitudes toward others are more likely to extend their associational activities into civic participation. Uncovering this role of trust as a catalyst that increases civic benefits of social associations may be an important step toward further enriching the debate on the role of trust in civil society (Cook 2001; Newton 2001). Trusting attitudes may generate participation because this belief in the motives of others may encourage civically oriented individuals—whether it is due to their demographic attributes, certain attitudes, or experiences—to become even more receptive to opportunities to help others. Continuing empirical investigation of this interactive relationship of trust with other important variables in public participation should allow us to have a more nuanced understanding of the role it plays in civic engagement.

Indeed, the role of trust at the individual level presented in this study mirrors the role for trust at the macro level recently outlined by Newton (2001: 202). He states that the relationship between social trust and democratic functions across societies "is more complex and indirect than appears to be the case at first." Although Newton argues for the study of social capital at the macro level, we find that the role of generalized trust within individuals is equally complex and indirect in nature relative to its influence on collective action.[5] Competing arguments have been made for the study of social capital at different levels of analysis (e.g., Brehm and Rahn 1997; Newton and Norris 2000), and the levels of analysis controversies involved with this concept remain contentious (e.g., Greeley 1997a). With this stated, the results we have uncovered concerning generalized trust provide at least some possibilities for forging stronger cross-level ties within the social capital literature. More specifically, our results speak to an indirect role for generalized trust working with various forms of social associations in building collective action.

This study, then, strongly suggests that research on social capital must pay particular attention to the intersection of micro-individual civic attitudes with meso-social network connections. The findings presented here indicate that social networks work in concert with interpersonal trust to draw people in civic life. Extending this line of research, future research should consider whether other micro-individual characteristics such as political efficacy and institutional trust yield similar relationships when examined in relation to social activities. From this perspective, the cultivation of active citizenship may be partially an outcome of the interplay between micro-level attitudes and meso-social connections. If true, networks of association, both formal and informal, may work with a range of civic virtues to encourage engagement.

[5] Newton's argument focuses solely on where the concept of social capital should be located in terms of a level of analysis. However, other recent research has argued that the lack of substantive findings concerning levels of generalized trust within individuals may be due more to poor operationalization of the concept at the individual level (e.g., Glaeser et al. 2000).

APPENDIX 1
QUESTION WORDING

Civic Participation:	For each activity listed, please place an "x" in the appropriate box to indicate how often during the last 12 months you, yourself, have engaged in this activity:
	Did volunteer work; worked on a community project
Social Associations:	For each activity listed, please place an "x" in the appropriate box to indicate how often during the last 12 months you, yourself, have engaged in this activity:
Informal Socializing:	Gave or attended a dinner party, entertained people in my home, visited friends
Public Attendance:	Visited an art gallery or museum, attended a lecture, went to a public library, went to a zoo
Religious Attendance:	Attended a church or other house of worship.
Interpersonal Trust:	Most people are honest.
Demographic and Contextual Variables:	
Education level:	Attended Elementary; Grad of Elementary; Attend High School; Grad High/Trade School; Attend College; Graduated College; Post-Grad School; Not Specified
Income:	Into which of the following categories does your annual household income fall?
	Under $10,000; $10,000-$14,999; $15,000-$19,999; $20,000-$24,999; $25,000-$29,999; $30,000-$34,999; $35,000-$39,999; $40,000-$44,999; $45,000-$49,999; $50,000-$59,999; $60,000-$69,999; $70,000-$79,999; $80,000-$89,999; $90,000-$99,999; $100,000 or more; Not Specified.
Age:	Respondent's exact age in years.
Sex:	Coded as (0) = Male; (1) = Female.
Own Home:	Owned by respondent (coded 1); rented for cash (coded 0); Occupied, no rent paid (coded 0); Not specified.
Population Density:	non-MSA (less than 50,000); 50,000-499,999; 500,000-1,999,999; 2,000,000.
Attitudinal and Personality Variables:	
Charity Ethic:	For each statement listed I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with this statement (Possible responses: I definitely disagree; I generally disagree; I moderately disagree; I moderately agree; I generally agree; I definitely agree.) I make a special effort to buy from companies that support charitable causes.
Extroversion	I am a homebody; I guess I'm what you would call a couch potato.
Media Use:	
Local Media Use:	Below is a list of sections of the newspaper. Please "X" each section that you read most of all issues of: News Section; Business Section; Editorial Section; Life Style Section.
	Listed below are different television programs. Please "X" each television show that you watch because you really like it: Local news.

APPENDIX 2
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF INFORMAL ASSOCIATIONS

Item	Factor Loadings	
Public Attendance		
Visited an art gallery or museum	.75	.04
Went to a public library	.70	−.08
Attended a lecture	.60	.09
Went to a zoo	.59	−.02
Informal Socializing		
Entertained people in my home	.02	.79
Gave or Attended a dinner party	.17	.73
Spent a lot of time visiting friends	−.10	.67
Variance accounted for (%)	32.65	16.95

Notes: Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis (Component 1 Eigenvalue: 2.286; Component 2 Eigenvalue: 1.186); Rotation method: Oblimin.
N = 3,369

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