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Civic Engagement, Interpersonal Trust, and Television Use: An Individual-Level Assessment of Social Capital

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The mechanisms underlying the formation and sustenance of social capital on the individual level were explored with a structural model composed of the endogenous variables of civic engagement and interpersonal trust. Using the 1995 DDB Needham life style study, analysis of the model permitted an examination of the strength and direction of the causal relationships driving the "virtuous circle" of participation and trust; the demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal factors that are exogenous to these latent variables; and the linkage between these components of social capital and viewing preferences for specific television genres. The results indicate that (1) the direction of the linkage between civic engagement and interpersonal trust is mainly from participating to trusting; and (2) television viewing plays a conditional role in the production of social capital that is dependent on the use of particular genres.

KEY WORDS: civic engagement; media uses and gratifications; political participations; social capital; television; trust

In a recent commentary on the "disciplinary divide" between political science and mass communication, Jamieson and Cappella (1996) asserted that scholars in these domains "see research through the biases created by their presuppositions and preferred methods" (p. 13). As a result, political scientists often focus their attention on civic consequences and the socioeconomic factors that shape these outcomes, leaving communication researchers to assess the content of media and the impact of messages on political activity.

This duality may cause both sides to paint incomplete pictures of the relationship between media and politics. Biases in the scholarly efforts of communication researchers and political scientists may limit the validity and generalizability of their findings to a complex political world of numerous contributing variables,

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varied media influences, and distinct audience motivations (Jamieson & Cappella, 1996). Graber (1987) warned that as this cross-disciplinary research grows more complex, neither perspective on the "media/politics interface" will suffice without drawing insights from the other.

These concerns may be particularly relevant for research on social capital, stemming from Putnam's (1995a) "bowling alone" thesis. Describing a combination of factors—mainly the "virtuous circle" of civic engagement and interpersonal trust—that act together to allow citizens to pursue joint social objectives, Putnam (1995b, p. 666) asserted that "America's stock of social capital has been shrinking for more than a quarter century." After outlining a long list of possible culprits for this deficit, he concluded that television, as a whole, is to blame. This determination, though provocative, is dubious to communication scholars, who are aware of differences in content, usage patterns, and viewing effects within this medium (Cappella, Lee, & Southwell, 1997; Norris, 1996). This is not the only critique leveled against Putnam's thesis: Levi (1996) complained that the mechanisms underlying the formation and sustenance of social capital require clearer specification, whereas Uslaner (1996, 1998) argued that attitudinal factors better explain the aggregate-level decline and individual-level production of social capital.

The present study attempts to address a number of these concerns. Following Brehm and Rahn (1997), I specify the process through which social capital is maintained by conceiving of it as the reciprocal relationship between civic engagement (formal group memberships and social participation) and interpersonal trust (generalized faith in the honesty and integrity of others). Further, I identify a number of demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal variables that affect this reciprocal relationship. I also disaggregate television viewing into genres—such as social dramas, news programming, and situation comedies—that correspond with particular media uses and gratifications (Garramone, 1985; McLeod & Becker, 1981; McQuail & Windahl, 1993) in order to assess the relationship of viewing these different types of television content with participation in community life and trust in others.

Much of the previous work on this topic has conceived of social capital as a property of the aggregate and has focused on the existence of the decline in participation and trust. Accordingly, these reports have focused on shifts over the last several decades in these components of social capital and considered various factors that may have contributed to their change over time (Ladd, 1996; Putnam, 1995b; Putnam & Yonish, 1997; Uslaner, 1996). However, attention has increasingly been directed toward explorations of the individual-level causes and correlates of civic engagement and interpersonal trust (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Cappella et al., 1997; Norris, 1996; Uslaner, 1998). Although such research is less explicitly concerned with the supposed decline, "accounting for production of social capital is as equally important an undertaking as understanding over-time changes in levels" (Brehm & Rahn, 1997).

I adopted this perspective for the purpose of my analysis. Specifically, I used the 1995 DDB Needham Life Style Study, an annual national survey conducted by a prominent advertising agency, to test a structural model of social capital comprising the endogenous variables of civic engagement and interpersonal trust. By combining the richness of current theorizing on social capital with a systematic evaluation of media use, this study attempted to accomplish three goals: (1) examining the strength and direction of the linkages between civic engagement and interpersonal trust, (2) accounting for demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal factors that contribute to the production of these latent variables, and (3) clarifying the linkage between social capital and television use.

Social Capital

Explaining the declining rate of voter turnout and participation over the past three decades has proven a difficult task for researchers interested in issues of democratic involvement (see Miller, 1992; Rosenstone, Hansen, Freedman, & Grabarek, 1993; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Scholars have considered both macropolitical conditions (such as voter registration laws) and micropolitical factors (including individual resources and characteristics). The concept of social capital provides an interesting perspective on this long debate. On the basis of insights from the study of local government in Italy, Putnam (1993) used the term social capital (following Coleman, 1990) to describe elements of social life—such as networks, norms, and trust—that provide the means for citizens to work together more effectively in attempts to resolve collective action problems. Thus, social capital is not strictly political; rather, it is a broader conception of societal relations, interactions, and values that have important implications for political life.

According to Putnam (1995a, 1995b), social connectedness and interpersonal trust are component parts of the aggregate social capital in a given society. Bowling in a league, attending church, participating in community and volunteer activities, engaging a neighbor, even having coffee with a friend, "embodies and creates" social capital. Thus, various institutions can foster the interactions and beliefs that feed the commendable cycle of connectedness and trust: "The more we connect with other people, the more we trust them, and vice versa" (Putnam, 1995b, p. 665). For a community, frequent cooperation by its members is expected to lead to tighter social linkages and increased trust in one another. Support for this idea can be found in experimental research focusing on iterative prisoner's dilemma games—cooperation begets trust, which leads to further cooperation (Axelrod, 1984). Although determining the flow of causation outside the laboratory is theoretically and methodologically complex, Brehm and Rahn (1997) reported evidence that suggests it flows mainly from participating to trusting.

Of particular concern, then, is Putnam's (1995a) assertion that civic engagement and social participation have been declining for more than 25 years. This trend is seen in a variety of settings: decreases in memberships in organizations such as

the PTA, the Red Cross, bowling leagues, and unions; reduction of informal socializing with friends and neighbors; and sharp drops in political participation (with the exception of check writing and petition signing), especially attendance at political events and party activities. Putnam (1995a, 1995b) used analyses of the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Election Study (NES), and more recently the Roper Poll and the DDB Needham Life Style Study (Putnam & Yonish, 1997), to support his assertion that participation and trust have declined substantially, suggesting that this generation is less interconnected and trusting than the preceding one.[1]

Television as Culprit

Trying to determine the causes of the decline in social capital has been one of the central concerns of theorizing on the concept. Putnam (1995b; see also Putnam & Yonish, 1997) named many possible suspects: busyness and time pressure, economic hard times or the perception of economic troubles, residential mobility, suburbanization, women's entry into the work force, the breakdown of the family, the disillusionment with and revolt against authority that characterized the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growth of the welfare state, generational change, the civil rights revolution, and the rise of television. The theoretical wealth of Putnam's argument lies in the variety, caliber, and quantity of potential causes he identified for the decline in social capital.

After ruling out other probable suspects, Putnam (1995b) pointed to television as the culprit. Aggregate-level evidence shows that the number of hours Americans spend with television on a daily basis has increased during the period in question, placing the decline of social capital in step with the rise of television. Putnam also used individual-level data to show that even when controlling for education, income, age, race, place of residence, work status, and gender, television viewing is negatively associated with both civic engagement and interpersonal trust. The same relationships are positive for newspaper reading. Putnam pointed to this contrast as support for his conclusion that television is to blame for the erosion of social capital.

So how might television erode social capital? Time displacement from civic activities and negative effects on viewers' outlooks of social reality (i.e., the "mean world" effect; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980) were Putnam's main

[1] Because of this paper's focus on the individual-level production of social capital, rather than its decline over the last three decades, I do not present data on change in levels of participation and trust over time. The DDB Needham Life Styles data set does permit such an analysis, which was undertaken by Putnam and Yonish (1997). They reported substantial downward shifts in levels of participation in community organizations (i.e., church and club meeting attendance), informal socializing (i.e., entertaining at home, hosting a dinner party), and social trust (i.e., belief in the honesty of others) in their analysis of the 1975 through 1997 Life Styles data. They also found generational differences in volunteering during this period.

answers. However, as Norris (1996) argued, these critiques of the media are "drawn in black-and-white terms, as though there is one television experience, rather than multiple channels and programs, and one audience, rather than different types of viewers" (p. 475). Thus, many scholars find Putnam's conception of social capital more convincing than his somewhat speculative conclusion concerning television's role in its decline (Cappella et al., 1997; Uslaner, 1998).

Some recent research empirically demonstrates this point. Through an analysis of the American Citizen Participation Study (see Verba et al., 1995), Norris (1996) found some support for her claim that news and public affairs programming may actually prove beneficial to the health of society. In addition to the role of age and education in equations predicting various forms of activism, she found that viewing informational programming contributes positively to participation, whereas total television viewing contributes negatively. However, Norris disaggregated only one type of programming and did not consider the possibility that viewing other television genres may have similar independent effects.

When Cappella et al. (1997) included other types of programming content in their analysis of 1995 and 1996 NES trust and care-giving items, they concluded that "Norris' report that television news is associated with political activism does not extend to interpersonal trust" (p. 24). Indeed, they found that upbeat sitcoms such as *Friends* actually run counter to Putnam's expectations, yielding positive associations with interpersonal trust. However, the analyses of Norris (1996) and Cappella et al. (1997) fall short on two counts: They fail to examine the reciprocal relationship between interpersonal trust and civic engagement, and they do not consider the influence of attitudinal factors (such as contentment and financial concerns) and contextual variables (such as population density) in their analyses of factors contributing to participation or trust.

Production of Social Capital

A number of studies have attempted to more carefully specify the mechanisms underlying the formation and sustenance of social capital on an individual level. The most convincing analyses have simultaneously examined interpersonal trust and civic engagement, considering the causal relationships among these variables (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 1998). As a consequence of their concern with individual rather than time-serial effects, these scholars cast their causal net widely across many of the suspects Putnam dismissed and even added some of their own.

Brehm and Rahn (1997) analyzed pooled GSS data to test a three-part structural model of the individual-level causes and consequences of social capital, comprising civic engagement, interpersonal trust, and confidence in government. As mentioned above, they found that participation and trust are in a "tight reciprocal relationship" where the connection is stronger from participation to trust. Exogenous variables in their structural model included generational cohorts, level of education, real income, race, marital status, population density, partisanship, fear

of crime, life satisfaction, newspaper reading, and hours of television viewing. Their findings are consistent with the existing literature on civic participation and social trust. Educational resources, financial and time pressures, psychological engagement with politics, contextual factors, and the use of television shape individuals' involvement in the community (Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Putnam, 1995b; Putnam & Yonish, 1997; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995), whereas age, economic resources, race, fear of crime, and faith in institutions influence individuals' trust in others (Ferraro, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995; Mullen, 1991; Rahn, 1997).

Uslaner's (1998) analysis of interpersonal trust and participation in voluntary organizations confirms some of Brehm and Rahn's conclusions, although it contradicts others. He found that optimism about the future, satisfaction with friends, and contextual factors, along with age, income, and race, predict trust in others. When treating trust as endogenous to participation, he concluded that education, community ties, and optimism about the future contribute to civic participation. However, Uslaner did not examine the role of partisanship, fear of crime, or newspaper reading in his analysis, and he failed to detect any relationship for television viewing.

Unfortunately, both Brehm and Rahn (1997) and Uslaner (1998) did not attempt to disaggregate television content. This is particularly problematic given the conclusions they drew from their analyses. Uslaner determined that television viewing plays no role—either positive or negative—in the production of social capital, on the basis of the inclusion of one variable measuring hours of television use in equations predicting trust and participation. Only two media variables were included in Brehm and Rahn's model: hours of television use and newspaper reading. Viewing television was found to be significantly negatively related to civic engagement, whereas reading newspapers was found to be positively related. Thus, their model, like Putnam's analysis, provides an unflattering portrayal of television's role in civil society on the basis of a single indicator.

Motives for Media Use

Motivational theories of media uses and gratifications may provide richer insight into television's relationship with social capital than is offered by current theorizing in political science (see Katz & Gurevitch, 1974; McQuail, 1987a; Swanson, 1987).[2] This approach is concerned with how

> (1) personal social circumstances and psychological dispositions together influence both (2) general habits of media use and also (3) beliefs and expectations about the benefits offered by media, which shape (4) specific acts of media choice and consumption, followed by (5) assessment of the value of the experience (with consequences for further media use) and, possibly, (6) application of benefits acquired in other areas of experience and social activity. (McQuail, 1987b, p. 235)

[2] Many scholars have reemphasized a motivational, or functional, view of attitudes and social behavior in their examinations of message-based persuasion and media influence (see Herek, 1986; Pratkanis & Greenwald, 1989; Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 1996; Snyder & DeBono, 1987).

Over the last four decades, research has tried to answer the questions of why individuals choose to attend to particular media channels or types of content, and what gratifications they expect and gain as a result of these interactions (McQuail, 1985; Rosengren, Palmgren, & Wenner, 1985; Zillman & Bryant, 1985). This inquiry has led to the discovery of regular patterns of consumption and fulfillment: "Individuals ignore personally irrelevant . . . messages and pay attention to the kinds of things that they need and that they find gratifying" (Graber, 1993, p. 212).

Many theorists suggest a four-part typology of media use and gratifications: an information function, a personal identity function, an integration and social interaction function, and an entertainment and diversion function. In fulfilling the information function, people use media to explore relevant events, seek advice or opinions on practical matters, learn about their surroundings, or gain a sense of security through knowledge. In satisfying the personal identity function, people use media to reinforce personal values, or gain insight into themselves and their surroundings. To meet the integration and social interaction function, people use media to achieve social empathy and a sense of belonging, find a basis for conversation and social interaction, carry out social roles, or connect with family, friends, and society. To address the entertainment and diversion function, people use media to satisfy desires for escape, relaxation, emotional release, and sexual arousal (Bennett, 1988; Zillman, 1985).

These media uses and gratifications may contribute to the production of social capital—some positively, others negatively. Informational uses of the media may provide people with issues or problems that they feel deserve their attention; personal-identity uses may supply people with ways of understanding themselves and their social world; integration and social interaction uses may offer people models of social behavior they can emulate in civic life, allowing them to connect with others. In contrast, entertainment uses may be detrimental to social capital, because the main function of such media use is to amuse and distract (see Garramone, 1985; Katz & Gurevitch, 1974; McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Rosengren & Windahl, 1989; Zillman & Bryant, 1985).

More likely, programming may not directly cause social capital to rise or fall; instead, particular classes of media content may attract viewers who seek to satisfy certain motivations more broadly. People who pursue informational gratifications from the media, for example, may be those who strive to fulfill such motivations in their behaviors beyond media selection. McLeod and Becker (1981) suggested that "more attention should be paid to the question of how exposure to various types of media content combine with motives to produce effects" (p. 95). However, secondary

analysis of survey data does not usually permit researchers to understand the motives of respondents directly, unless specific open-ended probes or checklists of motivations are included in the questionnaire (Becker, 1979; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973).

In the absence of such information, researchers can examine respondents' use of particular classes of media and infer the gratifications they may be trying to attain. Researchers using this inferential approach take the point of view of audience members and assign meaning to their actions on the basis of the content of the programs they are viewing and the function their actions seem to serve (McLeod & Becker, 1981).[3] Thus, the use of particular types of media content can be viewed as satisfying certain functions (Chaffee & Berger, 1987). Previous work, however, has not explicitly connected the four basic motivations outlined above with the viewing of particular television genres, nor has it linked these motivations with interpersonal trust and civic engagement.

Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to assume that consuming media content that provides information or contains models of social interaction will be positively related to civic engagement, whereas viewing programs that promote escapism and diversion from everyday social life will be negatively related to civic engagement. Similarly, the consumption of content that features virtuous or sanguine lead characters and an optimistic outlook on social relations should be positively related to interpersonal trust, whereas viewing programs that do not have these implications for one's personal identity should be unrelated to interpersonal trust. Any consideration of these proposed linkages, however, must be performed while accounting for other variables that contribute to social capital.

Accordingly, when examining the relationship between interpersonal trust and civic engagement, I explore the unique role of various genres of television use, while simultaneously considering the demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal variables that help to shape these components of social capital. By developing a nonrecursive causal model composed of participation and trust, I am able to address three questions central to current theorizing on the topic of social capital: (1) Is the linkage between civic engagement and interpersonal trust stronger from joining to trusting than in the other direction? (2) What factors contribute to the production of these latent variables? (3) Does television viewing play a contextual role in the creation of social capital that is dependent on the use of particular genres?

Structural Model

To generate the structural equation to test these issues, I performed a secondary analysis of the 1995 DDB Needham Life Style Study. This annual study draws its

[3] Researchers adopting this approach must demonstrate the ability to detect some surrogate, such as a causally related variable, to specify the motive. Validity is illustrated by predicting relationships within this nomological network.

sample from the Market Facts consumer mail panel; questionnaires are sent to prerecruited individuals who complete the surveys at home. Households selected for the study are balanced for geographic region, family size, age, income, and population density. In 1995, of the 5,000 mailed questionnaires, 3,613 were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 72%. The very poor, the very rich, transient populations, and minority populations are underrepresented by this panel. However, the data have proven to be an effective barometer of mainstream America (Groeneman, 1994; Putnam & Yonish, 1997).

The model I developed using these data begins with the assumption that the social capital dynamic reveals itself as a reciprocal causal relationship between civic engagement and interpersonal trust. A wide variety of exogenous predictors were explored as instruments for assessing the underlying causes of social capital. Although not all of the individual items and indices discussed below contributed to the model, describing all of them provides an indication of the constructs thought to affect interpersonal trust and civic engagement.

Endogenous Variables

Civic Engagement—membership in formal community groups and participation in social activities—was operationalized by constructing an additive index of five behavioral items. Respondents were asked to report how often they considered themselves influential in their neighborhood, went to a club meeting, attended church, did volunteer work, and worked on a community project (see the Appendix for exact wording of items). Survey participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (none in the past year) to 7 (weekly). The resultant index achieved $\alpha = .66$.

Interpersonal Trust—generalized faith in the honesty and integrity of others—was operationalized by a single indicator because only one item in the survey—"Most people are honest"—dealt with the construct as traditionally defined. Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement on a standard evaluative measure, a scale ranging from 1 (definitely disagree) to 6 (definitely agree) and containing no neutral category. Other items that addressed issues of trust—such as "An honest man cannot get elected to high office" and "The big investment firms are honestly doing their best to help people plan for the future"—did not correlate highly with the Interpersonal Trust item and thus could not be used to construct an internally consistent index.[4] These items were used as indicators of trust in institutions and are described in greater detail below.

[4] The correlation between the items "Most people are honest" and "An honest man cannot get elected to high office" was .16 ($p < .001$). The correlation between the items "Most people are honest" and "The big investment firms are honestly doing their best to help people plan for the future" was .20 ($p < .001$).

Exogenous Variables

Three key demographic predictors must be considered first: age, education, and income. Previous research has demonstrated that older Americans are both more trusting and more engaged in civic life (Norris, 1996; Putnam, 1995b; Putnam & Yonish, 1997; Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 1998). Therefore, age should be positively associated with Interpersonal Trust and Civic Engagement.[5] Education is expected to manifest a positive relationship with Civic Engagement, because education provides citizens with the skills required to engage in civic life—letter writing and organizing events, for example—and socializes them to value civic participation for its own sake (Norris, 1996; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995).

Income is more difficult to pin down. People with greater disposable incomes may have greater resources, but they also may have more demands on their time. As a result, there may not be a significant relationship between income and Civic Engagement. However, the relationship between income and Interpersonal Trust should be positive, because greater income should reduce beliefs that others are working against one's interests, leading to more affirmative evaluations of the integrity of most people (Fukuyama, 1995; Uslaner, 1998). Also, the hardships associated with low incomes may be contrary to "the supportive environment necessary for nurturing trusting attitudes" (Brehm & Rahn, 1997).

Three single-item situational/contextual variables were also included in the analysis: racial category, marital status, and population density of city of residence. Blacks should have lower scores on Interpersonal Trust as a result of past personal experiences leading to increased wariness of others—specifically, the high probability of facing victimization due to prejudice (Mullen, 1991; Uslaner, 1998). Divorced people seem less likely to be involved in civic activities than those who are not divorced, because of a withdrawal from social life associated with the negative experience of marital breakdown. Conversely, the complex cross-cutting social networks that characterize many families may encourage connectedness and participation (Fischer, 1982). Similarly, people living in cities with lower population densities should exhibit higher scores on Civic Engagement, because smaller communities are more tightly knit. Said a different way, the atomization of individuals in large cities leaves people anonymous and disconnected, providing little opportunity for recruitment into civic volunteerism (Fischer et al., 1977; McLeod et al., 1996; Verba et al., 1995).

Two single-item political orientational variables, Partisanship and Interest in Politics, were incorporated in the model. Partisanship—created by recoding a party identification variable into dichotomous nonpartisan/partisan categories—should be positively related to Civic Engagement because people who feel an association with a particular political party should manifest greater psychological involvement in their communities (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Interest in Politics represents a broader concept. This variable was measured by asking respondents to state their agreement with the statement "I am interested in politics" on a 6-point scale. Citizens who express such an interest should display greater Civic Engagement because of a concern with public problems and issues (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1997).

A variety of attitudes are also thought to be related to Interpersonal Trust and/or Civic Engagement, and hence a set of attitudinal variables was created. A standard 6-point scale was applied to assess responses to each statement used to construct these attitudinal variables (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 1998; Verba et al., 1995).

A Financial Concerns index was created from the following statements: "Our family is too heavily in debt," "No matter how fast our income goes up we never seem to get ahead," "Credit cards have gotten me into too much debt," "We have more to spend on extras than most of our neighbors do," and "Our family income is high enough to satisfy nearly all our important desires." Responses were appropriately reversed and summed, yielding an index with $\alpha = .74$. This variable should be negatively related to Civic Engagement; concern about one's financial situation seems likely to reduce altruism and generosity with free time. Conversely, those who hold more favorable attitudes about their current financial situation should be more willing to share their time through civic activities (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam & Yonish, 1997).

An individual Contentment index was constructed using the following five statements: "I am very satisfied with the way things are going in my life these days," "I wish I could leave my present life and do something entirely different," "I feel I am under a great deal of pressure most of the time," "Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking," and "I feel like I am so busy trying to make everyone else happy that I don't have control over my own life." The last four statements were reverse-coded and summed with the first statement; the resulting index achieved $\alpha = .74$. Because satisfaction with one's current life-situation "seems to exert a 'rosy glow' over other judgment targets," Contentment should be positively related to trusting attitudes (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Moreover, people who are satisfied with their social situation and optimistic about the future may not feel as compelled to strive to fulfill internal drives as those who are less satisfied. These contented individuals, then, should be more likely to engage in civic activities that benefit others. In short, Contentment should be positively related to both Interpersonal Trust and Civic Engagement (Uslaner, 1998).

A Busyness index was created from the following statements: "It seems as though everyone in our family is always on the run," "I work very hard most of the

[5] To assess whether age had a curvilinear relationship with Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust, I computed mean values for these two variables for 10-year age breaks ranging from under 20 to over 80 years of age. Positive *linear* relationships were observed for both variables. For Civic Engagement, the value increased steadily from 10.2 (under 20) to 15.5 (over 80); for Interpersonal Trust, the value increased steadily from 2.8 (under 20) to 4.2 (over 80).

time," and "I have a lot of spare time." Responses were appropriately reversed and summed, yielding an index with $\alpha = .53$. This is somewhat less than the accepted standard of .70, but it seems adequate for a three-item index with a mean interitem correlation of .27. In the absence of controls, Busyness might be expected to be negatively related to participation in community activities. However, when other related factors such as age, education, and marital status are taken into account, Busyness should be positively associated with Civic Engagement; those who consider themselves busy may hold this attitude because they occupy their time with civic activities and social participation.

The items concerning trust in institutions, mentioned above, were used as indicators of two separate constructs. The statement "An honest man cannot get elected to high office" served as a measure of Trust in Government. The statement "The big investment firms are honestly doing their best to help people plan for the future" functioned as a measure of Trust in Big Business. The intercorrelation between these two items was a modest .16 ($p < .001$); therefore, they were confidently assumed to be indicators of two independent constructs. Although these items are suboptimal measures of the global trust constructs they represent, both were expected to be positively associated with Interpersonal Trust because confidence and trust in social institutions should contribute to individual assessments of the trustworthiness of more proximate others (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Better measurement of trust in institutions would have been preferable, because these specific items may not adequately assess attitudes toward the wide variety of governmental and business institutions.

Finally, a statement reading "I worry a lot about myself or a family member becoming a victim of a crime" served as the measure of Fear of Crime. Because feelings of threat may have coercive effects on one's evaluations of personal security, Fear of Crime was expected to be negatively related to Interpersonal Trust (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Ferraro, 1995).

Media Use Variables

All media variables were measured dichotomously, with respondents indicating that they did or didn't watch a given program (or, in the case of the newspaper variables, did or didn't read a given section). Indices of media use were constructed using factor analysis and assessment of internal consistency. One index of newspaper reading and seven indices of television viewing were created.

The Newspaper Reading index was built from two items referring to readership of the hard news sections of local daily papers: reading the news section (national and metro), and reading the editorial section. The intercorrelation between the two items was .30. Newspaper readership should be positively related to Civic Engagement. Newspaper use likely fulfills informational and social interaction functions for individuals (McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Rosengren & Windahl, 1989). Although some news may contribute to social withdrawal (i.e., heavy crime coverage causing fear), most stories contained in these sections of the paper should allow people to connect with others who share their concerns, fostering information-based social action (McLeod et al., 1997; Tocqueville, 1840/1969).

Indices of television viewing were created by means of a factor analysis that used a Varimax rotation to separate individuals' responses concerning 23 distinct programs—20 television series that were regularly broadcast in 1995, plus three types of news programs—into genre-specific categories. This analysis, which accounted for 54.4% of the variance in the 23 items, yielded a six-factor solution that was highly interpretable. Each program loaded on only one of the six factors; all programs had strong factor loadings (see Table I).

The Broadcast News Viewing index was developed by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the national evening news, local news programming, and interview/magazine programs. The three-item index achieved $\alpha = .60$ and a mean interitem correlation of .33. Although much of the same rationale that was applied above to newspaper readership would seem to apply to broadcast news viewing, some important distinctions exist that may attenuate possible linkages with Civic Engagement. The much-heralded rise of "tabloid television" news—a mix of crime, sex, gossip, and human-interest stories—has pushed out more investigative and actionable content (Ehrlich, 1996; Graber, 1993). As a result, even if people approach broadcast news sources with some of the same motives they hold toward newspapers, they may not gain the same types of gratifications. This is not to say that television news does not offer any gratification; instead, the gratification may be as much entertainment as informational and social interaction (for an opposing perspective, see Norris, 1996). Thus, no explicit prediction is made regarding Broadcast News Viewing.

The Science Fiction Viewing index was generated by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the programs *SeaQuest DSV*, *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, *Earth 2*, and *The X-Files*. The index yielded $\alpha = .68$. This class of programs may serve both entertainment and personal identity functions. Such programs take place in fantastic realms that are far removed from everyday civic life; when they deal with social issues they do so in an abstract, hypothetical manner. Indeed, these programs seem to center on high action and imaginative fantasy, providing a diversion from worldly concerns by satisfying an entertainment function. As a result, viewing these shows should be negatively related to Civic Engagement. However, these types of programs may serve a personal identity function as well. Science fiction programs often feature heroic lead characters with unquestionable integrity and great moral fortitude who oppose forces of injustice and oppression. Viewers of these programs may find reinforcement in these optimistic portraits of human virtue and selflessness. Thus, although the escapist quality of viewing science fiction may be negatively associated with social connectedness, watching these same shows may be positively related to Interpersonal Trust.

Social dramas such as *Law & Order* and *ER* offer viewers a distinctly different set of priorities. These programs confront serious social problems in a "realistic"

Table I. Factor Analysis of Television Programs and Reliability of Resultant Indices

Program	Rotated factor loading	Cronbach's α
Evening network news	.788	
Local news	.742	
News interview shows	.662	
Broadcast News index		.60
SeaQuest DSV	.779	
M.A.N.T.I.S.	.628	
Earth 2	.780	
The X-Files	.636	
Science Fiction index		.68
NYPD Blue	.677	
Chicago Hope	.664	
ER	.682	
Law & Order	.661	
Homicide: Life on the Street	.623	
Social Drama index		.68
Grace Under Fire	.735	
Coach	.596	
Roseanne	.591	
Home Improvement	.756	
Kinship Sitcom index		.66
Seinfeld	.749	
Frasier	.828	
Mad About You	.630	
The John Larroquette Show	.669	
Friendship Sitcom index		.74
America's Most Wanted	.839	
Unsolved Mysteries	.822	
Rescue 911	.728	
Reality-Based TV index		.75

manner, often pulling their story ideas from news accounts. People who choose to watch these programs may be motivated by information and social interaction goals—gaining social empathy and carrying out social roles—and may use the programming to develop action plans based on ideas they encounter. This perspective does not diminish the entertainment function that these programs surely serve; it merely recognizes that program content dealing with serious social issues may motivate action among its viewers. Therefore, viewing of social dramas should be positively related to Civic Engagement. The Social Drama Viewing index was generated by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the programs

ER, *Chicago Hope*, *Law & Order*, *Homicide: Life on the Street*, and *NYPD Blue*. The index produced $\alpha = .68$.

Some important distinctions can be inferred between situation comedies focusing on kinship relations and those focusing on friendship relations. "Kinship" sitcoms such as *Grace Under Fire*, *Roseanne*, and *Home Improvement* often feature the interactions within households, complete with parents, children, and extended family members. Some of these programs take on a more serious tone when they consider the difficulties and challenges associated with raising a family. Viewers who watch these programs may share a concern with family relations; they may gain mental feedback through their interaction with these characters—in essence, personal identity. This feedback on domestic relations, however, probably has few implications for viewers' societal-level judgments or behaviors. The Kinship Sitcom Viewing index was constructed by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the programs *Grace Under Fire*, *Coach*, *Roseanne*, and *Home Improvement*. The resultant index achieved $\alpha = .66$.

Sitcoms focusing on friendships rather than family, such as *Seinfeld* and *Frasier*, present a different view of social life. These shows depict characters who have strong circles of companionship. There are no children among the casts of these programs and the characters are single, newly married, or divorced. Most episodes focus on the camaraderie and bonds among the characters, presenting a light-hearted, often optimistic, view of the world. Although both types of comedies surely fulfill entertainment functions, people who watch "friendship" sitcoms may be satisfying a different personal identity function than those who watch kinship sitcoms. Watching sitcoms that depict companionship and high-jinks among close friends may be linked with a more hopeful world view and thus may be positively related to Interpersonal Trust; conversely, viewing sitcoms that focus on family relations should be unrelated to Interpersonal Trust, as these shows do not usually deal with social relations beyond the home (Cappella et al., 1997). The Friendship Sitcom Viewing index was constructed by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the programs *Seinfeld*, *Frasier*, *Mad About You*,[6] and *The John Larroquette Show*. This index yielded $\alpha = .74$.

Reality-based television programming depicts "nonfiction" events such as crimes, sinister happenings, and hazardous experiences. The conventional wisdom concerning this genre asserts that it fosters fear and a more dangerous view of societal interaction. If this is the case, citizens who are motivated to view this genre should display less Interpersonal Trust. The Reality-Based Television index was constructed by summing responses to items concerning viewership of the programs

[6] The couple on the series *Mad About You* has had a baby for the past year, though this was not the case when the survey was conducted.

America's Most Wanted, Unsolved Mysteries, and *Rescue 911*; it produced $\alpha = .75$.[7]

Finally, to represent the time displacement threat and the cultivation effect—that is, the "mean world" conception of social reality (Gerbner et al., 1980)—that may occur as a result of heavy television viewing, a variable was created to reflect total hours of television viewing. Putnam (1995b) asserted that increased viewing decreases trusting attitudes, whereas Brehm and Rahn (1997) reported that television use reduces the amount of time available for engaging in civic activities. Both used a self-reported "hours of television use" measure as an indicator of this construct. However, advertising research has found that people are not particularly good at estimating the total amount of time they spent with a particular media category. They are quite good, though, at recognizing or recalling particular programs (Sissors & Bumba, 1993). Accordingly, a variety of weekly programs that differed in length from one-half hour (sitcoms) to two hours (movie of the week, sports programming) were assigned a time value and summed to create a Total Television Viewing variable.[8] Scores on this index ranged from 0 to 49.5, with a mean value of 13.7.[9]

Table II lists all the variables and summarizes their expected relationships (positive or negative) with Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust, as described above. A positive relation between Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust was predicted, though the linkage was expected to be stronger from participating to trusting.

[7] Intercorrelations among the various television genre measures were examined to ensure that collinearity would not pose a problem during analysis. Of the 21 correlations examined, only one—the association between Kinship and Friendship sitcoms—exceeded .20; it achieved a value of .37 ($p < .001$).

[8] The Total Television Viewing variable used in this analysis was created by summing individuals' reported viewing of 22 half-hour programs (each given a value of .5), 27 hour-long programs (each given a value of 1), and 8 two-hour programs (each given a value of 2).

[9] Although the predicted relationships between viewing certain genres of television and the components of social capital are theory-driven, others are suggested for more intuitive reasons. Therefore, given the somewhat exploratory nature of this analysis, more fully specified regressions were run against both Interpersonal Trust and Civic Engagement to determine whether any unexpected effects were detected. For each latent variable, regressions included all the genres of television viewing, newspaper reading, and total television viewing while simultaneously accounting for demographic, situational/contextual, and attitudinal factors thought to contribute to the specific component of social capital. For the regression of Civic Engagement, only two media variables clearly contributed to the prediction (Newspaper Reading and Science Fiction Viewing), and another three were marginal (Friendship Sitcom Viewing, Social Drama Viewing, and Total Television Viewing). For the regression of Interpersonal Trust, again only two media variables clearly contributed to the prediction (Friendship Sitcom Viewing and Science Fiction Viewing), and another (Total Television Viewing) was marginal. On the basis of the strength of the contribution, Friendship Sitcom Viewing was included as a predictor variable against Interpersonal Trust instead of Civic Engagement. For theoretical reasons, Broadcast News Viewing and Reality-Based Television Viewing were retained for specification of the equations predicting trust and participation (see Ehrlich, 1996; Gerbner et al., 1980; Graber, 1993; Norris, 1996).

Table II. Predictions of Endogenous and Exogenous Variables Contributing to Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust

	Civic Engagement	Interpersonal Trust
Endogenous variables		
Civic Engagement		++
Interpersonal Trust	+	
Exogenous variables		
Demographic/contextual		
Age	+	+
Education	+	
Family income		+
Race		–
Marital status	–	
Local population density	–	
Attitudinal		
Partisanship	+	
Interest in Politics	+	
Financial Concerns	–	
Contentment	+	+
Busyness	+	
Trust in Government		+
Trust in Big Business		+
Fear of Crime		–
Media use variables		
Newspaper Reading	+	
Broadcast News Viewing		
Science Fiction Viewing	–	+
Social Drama Viewing	+	
Kinship Sitcom Viewing		
Friendship Sitcom Viewing		+
Reality-Based TV Viewing		–
Total Television Viewing	–	–

Analysis

This paper has suggested a number of central issues requiring empirical testing: the reciprocal nature of the relationship between civic engagement and interpersonal trust; the relative contribution of various demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, attitudinal, and media use variables to these components of social capital; and the assessment of television viewing's impact when it is separated into "functional" genres grounded in an understanding of media uses and gratifications. Before testing these issues, I performed two analyses to gain insight into the data. First, a zero-order correlation was run between the Civic Engagement index and the Interpersonal Trust measure to examine whether this

relationship existed in the absence of controls. The analysis revealed a correlation of .16 ($p < .001$).

Next, ordinary least-squares (OLS) regressions were run against Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust to estimate the reduced-form equation and achieve identification of the reciprocal model. Table III presents the original and respecified equations for Civic Engagement. All variables performed as expected, with the exception of Total Television Viewing. The absence of a relationship between Total Television Viewing and Civic Engagement weakens the time displacement argument Putnam offered. Further, no linkage was observed between Broadcast News Viewing and Civic Engagement. Notably, Social Drama Viewing did not contribute to the original OLS regression, but did predict community participation in the respecified equation when Total Television Viewing and Broadcast News Viewing were removed.[10] Thus, these two variables were not included as instruments for Civic Engagement in the full structural model. The respecified equation for Civic Engagement contains age and education as demographic predictors; population density and marital status as situational/contextual predictors; Partisanship and Interest in Politics as orientational predictors; Busyness, Financial Concerns, and Contentment as attitudinal predictors; and Newspaper Reading, Science Fiction Viewing, and Social Drama Viewing as media use predictors.

Table IV presents the original and respecified equations for interpersonal trust. With the exception of Fear of Crime and Reality-Based Television Viewing, all other variables contributed to the equation predicting Interpersonal Trust. However, Fear of Crime no longer predicted Interpersonal Trust when Kinship Sitcom Viewing and Reality-Based Television Viewing were removed from the equation. The lack of association for Fear of Crime and Reality-Based Television Viewing with Interpersonal Trust calls into question the belief that perceptions and depictions of a hostile environment contribute to less trust in others. Further, as expected, Kinship Sitcom Viewing did not serve as a predictor of interpersonal trust. Thus, these three variables were not included as instruments for Interpersonal Trust in the full structural model. The respecified equation for Interpersonal Trust includes age and income as demographic predictors; race as a situational/contextual predictor; Contentment, Trust in Government, and Trust in Big Business as attitudinal predictors; and Newspaper Reading, Friendship Sitcom Viewing, Science Fiction Viewing, and Total Television Viewing as media use predictors. Thus, Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust share only age, Contentment, and Science Fiction Viewing as common predictor variables.

[10] Social Drama Viewing was kept in the equation, and Total Television Viewing and Broadcast News Viewing were removed from the equation, for two reasons: (1) In the original regression equation, the standardized coefficients for Total Television Viewing and Broadcast News Viewing were not in the predicted direction, whereas the coefficient for Social Drama Viewing was in the predicted direction; and (2) there was a high degree of collinearity (correlation = .54, $p < .001$) between the measures of Social Drama Viewing and Total Television Viewing; no other genre viewing index achieved a higher intercorrelation with Total Television Viewing.

Table III. OLS Regression of Civic Engagement

	Original equation			Respecified equation		
	Coeff.		Std. coeff.	Coeff.		Std. coeff.
Age	.062	(.007)	.184***	.061	(.007)	.179***
Education	.797	(.080)	.177***	.779	(.079)	.173***
Marital status	−.860	(.292)	−.049**	−.849	(.292)	−.048**
Population density	−.251	(.041)	−.101***	−.252	(.041)	−.102***
Partisanship	1.253	(.200)	.106***	1.264	(.200)	.107***
Interest in Politics	.342	(.060)	.102***	.344	(.060)	.102***
Financial Concerns	−.065	(.018)	−.072***	−.063	(.017)	−.070***
Contentment	.085	(.019)	.085***	.084	(.019)	.084***
Busyness	.273	(.031)	.156***	.273	(.031)	.156***
Newspaper	.343	(.145)	.044*	.349	(.143)	.044*
Science Fiction	−.339	(.101)	−.059***	−.301	(.098)	−.052**
Social Drama	.078	(.076)	.020	.135	(.065)	.035*
Broadcast News	−.063	(.100)	−.013			
Total Television	.027	(.018)	.032			
Total R^2			.177***			.176***
	$N = 3,086$			$N = 3,086$		

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

As a simultaneous test of all the central issues outlined above, two-stage least-squares regressions were run with Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust alternately serving as criterion variables. Table V shows the results of this analysis.

A number of points are noteworthy when examining the results concerning Civic Engagement. First, the results do not provide support for Interpersonal Trust's contribution to participation in the community. The zero-order relationship does not remain robust when accounting for the common variance of predictor variables on Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust. Second, all the demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal variables performed as expected, with Civic Engagement holding positive relationships with age, education, Partisanship, Interest in Politics, Contentment, and Busyness and negative relationships with marital status, population density, and Financial Concerns. Third, the media use variables explain a significant amount of variance in Civic Engagement and contribute to the equation in the ways predicted by uses and gratifications theory: Newspaper Reading and Social Drama Viewing are positively associated, whereas Science Fiction Viewing is negatively associated. More important, the results are not unidirectional—television viewing has positive and negative linkages with Civic Engagement. In total, these variables accounted for 17.8% of variance in the Civic Engagement measure.

Table IV. OLS Regression of Interpersonal Trust

	Original equation			Respecified equation		
	Coeff.		Std. coeff.	Coeff.		Std. coeff.
Age	.017	(.001)	.212***	.017	(.001)	.219***
Income	.023	(.005)	.073***	.023	(.005)	.071***
Race	−.187	(.076)	−.041*	−.181	(.075)	−.040*
Contentment	.025	(.004)	.107***	.026	(.004)	.112***
Trust in Government	.105	(.013)	.106***	.105	(.013)	.129***
Trust in Big Business	.128	(.018)	.117***	.129	(.018)	.119***
Fear of Crime	−.028	(.014)	−.034*			
Science Fiction	.058	(.023)	.042*	.058	(.023)	.042*
Kinship Sitcom	−.005	(.018)	−.005			
Friendship Sitcom	.064	(.018)	.065***	.064	(.017)	.065***
Reality-Based TV	.013	(.020)	.012			
Total Television	−.007	(.004)	−.039*	−.008	(.003)	−.042*
Total R^2			.137***			.136***
	N = 3,372			N = 3,394		

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients.
*$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$.

Again, a number of points are noteworthy when considering the role of various factors in predicting levels of Interpersonal Trust. First, Civic Engagement contributes significantly to Interpersonal Trust; indeed, Civic Engagement explains more variance in the Interpersonal Trust measure than does any other variable, achieving a standardized regression coefficient of .22. Second, all the demographic, situational/contextual, and attitudinal variables performed as predicted, with Interpersonal Trust holding positive relationships with age, income, Contentment, Trust in Government, and Trust in Big Business, and negative relationships with race. Third, the media use variables explain a significant amount of variance in Interpersonal Trust and contribute to the equation in a manner consistent with uses and gratifications theory: Friendship Sitcom Viewing and Science Fiction Viewing have positive associations with Interpersonal Trust, whereas Total Television Viewing has the opposite relationship. Again, the results are not unidirectional—television viewing is shown to have positive and negative ties to Interpersonal Trust. In total, these variables accounted for 13.5% of variance in the Interpersonal Trust measure.

In short, hypotheses were confirmed for almost all the contributing variables. Only one side of the "virtuous circle" between civic engagement and interpersonal trust was supported; civic participation seems to foster interpersonal trust, but not vice versa. Many of the demographic, situational/contextual, orientational, and attitudinal variables suggested by previous research do play a role in the individual-level production

Table V. Structural Model of Civic Engagement and Interpersonal Trust

	Civic Engagement		
	Coeff.		Std. coeff.
Interpersonal Trust	.206	(.348)	.048
Age	.060	(.009)	.175***
Education	.768	(.081)	.171***
Marital status	−.911	(.300)	−.051**
Population density	−.257	(.042)	−.104***
Partisanship	1.163	(.207)	.099***
Interest in Politics	.337	(.062)	.101***
Financial Concerns	−.062	(.018)	−.069***
Contentment	.075	(.022)	.075***
Busyness	.261	(.032)	.149***
Newspaper	.334	(.145)	.042*
Science Fiction	−.320	(.101)	−.056**
Social Drama	.145	(.066)	.037*
Total R^2			.178***

	Interpersonal Trust		
	Coeff.		Std. coeff.
Civic Engagement	.052	(.013)	.221***
Age	.013	(.002)	.163***
Income	.016	(.006)	.050**
Race	−.191	(.082)	−.041*
Contentment	.024	(.004)	.102***
Trust in Government	.107	(.015)	.131***
Trust in Big Business	.109	(.020)	.100***
Science Fiction	.084	(.025)	.062***
Friendship Sitcom	.067	(.018)	.069***
Total Television	−.008	(.004)	−.041*
Total R^2			.135***
N = 2,963			

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses to the right of the unstandardized coefficients.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

of social capital. More important, the findings suggest that the gratifications viewers fulfill from their use of different television genres have serious implications for the study of social capital.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that Putnam's culprit, television, relates to social capital production much differently than he theorized. The pattern revealed here—of parallel positive and negative associations between the use of certain

types of television content and both civic engagement and interpersonal trust—suggests that television's relationship with social capital is dynamic and highly contextual. If television remains an important variable in research on social capital, which much research suggests it should, then the findings of this study indicate that it must be conceptualized with greater care.

Television, it seems, is not the monolithic danger that some research on social capital might lead us to believe. Instead, the relationships between the use of television, civic engagement, and interpersonal trust must be viewed as more conditional—highly dependent on the type of programming under consideration and on audience members' uses of it. How much television people watch appears to be less important than what they are watching. As this research demonstrates, different types of programming have opposing relationships with interpersonal trust and civic engagement. Notably, the media use variable Total Television Viewing was found to be weakly negatively associated with the endogenous variable Interpersonal Trust, suggesting some support for Putnam's (and Gerbner et al.'s) assertions concerning the "mean world" effect of television viewing. That these results occur while controlling for potentially confounding variables provides support for these conclusions.

These findings, however, should be interpreted with caution. As Uslaner (1996) asserted, it may be that "television doesn't cause mistrust . . . but [that] the people who watch a lot of television are the sorts of folks who . . . don't trust others" (p. 17). As this suggests, on one hand, the observed relationships could reflect different causal effects from the use of different classes of media; on the other hand, they could indicate that the use of these media classes is a surrogate for psychological gratification that these people seek more broadly, or that it simply reflects a psychological disposition these individuals hold regardless of their viewing habits. There are reasons to believe that the relationships observed in this study are not entirely the consequence of a self-selection; in particular, the relationships between media use and the latent variables are observed even when simultaneously accounting for a wide range of variables. Regardless, this is an empirical question that should be addressed by future research on the production and maintenance of social capital. Specifically, experimental studies could be conducted that manipulate the television content viewed by participants, which would allow researchers to assess whether viewing certain genres is causally related to interpersonal trust and civic participation.

Perhaps more important, the results of this analysis also indicate that civic engagement plays a powerful role in an individual's level of interpersonal trust. This suggests that participation in community activities allows individuals to gain positive experiences with others, fostering global assessments of increased faith. The inverse does not seem to occur. Beginning with high levels of interpersonal trust does not appear to lead individuals to seek venues for civic participation. Again, the conclusions of this analysis conflict with the argument put forth by Putnam (1995b) concerning the reciprocal relationship between trust and participation. However, Brehm and Rahn (1997), who also found a stronger linkage from participation to trust than from trust to participation, observed a mutually causal relationship between participation and trust. Therefore, the question of whether participation drives the relationship between connectedness and trust should be demonstrated with other data before disconfirmation of the "virtuous circle."

By moving away from a focus on time-serial effects and considering the individual-level causes of civic participation and interpersonal trust, this analysis also assesses the role other variables play in the production of social capital. Younger and less educated people, those who have experienced divorce or live in densely populated areas, and those who are not political partisans, newspaper readers, or otherwise interested in politics were found to be less engaged in civic life, as were people who are concerned about their finances, discontented with their lives, or unabsorbed in activities. Similarly, younger people, those with lower incomes, blacks, and individuals who are discontented with their lives and lack faith in social institutions were found to be less trusting of other people. Instead of focusing on a single culprit, future research, following the lead of Brehm and Rahn (1997), Cappella et al. (1997), Norris (1996), and Uslaner (1998), should cast the causal net widely to include an array of relevant variables. Given the role of age and contentment in equations predicting trust and participation, generational differences between younger and older cohorts and individual differences in satisfaction and optimism may be particularly important issues for future research (Putnam & Yonish, 1997).

Further, scholars working on both sides of the "disciplinary divide" who are interested in issues of civic participation and democratic processes must strive to include a more contextualized understanding of media variables in their assessments of social capital while simultaneously accounting for the complexity of the political world. It would be fruitful to start by paying closer attention to the breadth and diversity of television content, considering its impact beyond news programming. If political scientists and mass communication scholars are concerned with the role television plays in the production of social capital, they should insist that future NES and GSS surveys include questions that elicit data on the use of specific programming domains. If possible, indicators should be included to identify the motivations that viewers are trying to fulfill in their use of particular programming. This would allow researchers interested in the individual-level production of social capital to consider television's role with greater, and much needed, sensitivity.

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Appendix: Measures of Variables (Selected Items from the 1995 DDB Needham Life Styles Study)

Civic Engagement

"I have listed below some activities that you, yourself, may or may not have engaged in. For each activity listed, please place an 'x' in the appropriate box to indicate how often during the past 12 months you, yourself, have engaged in the activities: (1) none in the past year; (2) 1 to 4 times; (3) 5 to 8 times; (4) 9 to 11 times; (5) 12 to 24 times; (6) 25 to 51 times; (7) 52-plus times; and (8) not specified." Responses to five items were used: "I am influential in my neighborhood," "Went to a club meeting," "Attended church," "Did volunteer work," and "Worked on a community project."

Interpersonal Trust

"In this section, I have listed a number of statements about interests and opinions. For each statement listed I'd like to know whether you personally agree or disagree with the statement. After each statement, there are six numbers from 1 to 6. The higher the number, the more you tend to agree with the statement. The numbers may be described as follows: (1) I definitely disagree with the statement; (2) I generally disagree with the statement; (3) I moderately disagree with the statement; (4) I moderately agree with the statement; (5) I generally agree with the statement; (6) I definitely agree with the statement." Responses to one item were used: "Most people are honest."

Demographic/Contextual Variables

Income: "Into which of the following categories does your personal income fall? (1) under $10,000; (2) $10,000–$14,999; (3) $15,000–$19,999; (4) $20,000–$24,999; (5) $25,000–$29,999; (6) $30,000–$34,999; (7) $35,000–$39,999; (8) $40,000–$44,999; (9) $45,000–$49,999; (10) $50,000–$59,999; (11) $60,000–$69,999; (12) $70,000–$79,999; (13) $80,000–89,999; (14) $90,000–$99,999; (15) $100,000 or more; (16) not specified."

Marital status: "Which of the following best describes your marital status? (1) married; (2) widowed; (3) separated; (4) divorced; (5) single (never married); (6) not specified." (Recoded as 0 = all others, 1 = divorced)

The variables for age, education, race, and population density of area of residence were not generated from items but were determined from information contained in the Market Facts consumer database, as follows:

Age: Exact age from database.

Education: (1) attended elementary school; (2) graduated from elementary; (3) attended high school; (4) graduated from high school or trade school; (5) attended college; (6) graduated college; (7) postgraduate education.

Race: (1) white; (2) black; (3) Hispanic; (4) other. (Recoded as 0 = not black, 1 = black)

Population density of area of residence: (1) non–Metropolitan Statistical Area (less then 50,000); (2) 50,000–499,999; (3) 500,000–1,999,999; (4) more than 2,000,000.

Attitudinal Variables

Partisanship: "What is your political affiliation? (1) Democrat; (2) Republican; (3) some other specific party; (4) no party affiliation; (5) not specified." (Recoded as 0 = nonpartisan, 1 = partisan)

For the remaining items, see the question wording for Interpersonal Trust (agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a 6-point scale):

Interest in Politics: "I am interested in politics."

Financial Concerns: "Our family is too heavily in debt," "No matter how fast our income goes up we never seem to get ahead," "Credit cards have gotten me into too much debt," "We have more to spend on extras than most of our neighbors do," "Our family income is high enough to satisfy nearly all our important desires."

Contentment: "I am very satisfied with the way things are going in my life these days," "I wish I could leave my present life and do something entirely

different," "I feel I am under a great deal of pressure most of the time," "Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking," "I feel like I am so busy trying to make everyone else happy that I don't have control over my own life."

Busyness: "It seems as though everyone in our family is always on the run," "I work very hard most of the time," "I have a lot of spare time."

Trust in Government: "An honest man cannot get elected to high office."

Trust in Big Business: "The big investment firms are honestly doing their best to help people plan for the future."

Fear of Crime: "I worry a lot about myself or a family member becoming a victim of a crime."

Media Use Variables

Newspaper Reading: "Below is a list of sections of the newspaper. Please 'x' each section that you read all or most sections of ('x' as many as apply)." Responses to the following items were used: News section, editorial section.

Television Viewing: "Listed below are different television programs. Please 'x' each television show you watch because you really like it ('x' as many as apply)." Responses to the following items were used: Evening network news (Jennings, Rather, Brokaw), local news, news interviews (*60 Minutes*, *20/20*, *Nightline*, *Meet the Press*, etc.), *SeaQuest DSV*, *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, *Earth 2*, *The X-Files*, *NYPD Blue*, *Chicago Hope*, *ER*, *Law & Order*, *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Seinfeld*, *Frasier*, *Mad About You*, *The John Larroquette Show*, *Grace Under Fire*, *Coach*, *Roseanne*, *Home Improvement*, *America's Most Wanted*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, *Rescue 911*.

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Bowling Together, Bowling Alone: The Development of Generalized Trust in Voluntary Associations

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Although membership in voluntary associations has been presumed to be a central element in the building of social capital, micro-level knowledge about whether and how voluntary associations make their members more trusting and cooperative has been lacking. The link between trust and involvement in associations in Germany and Sweden was explored by means of a questionnaire concerning traits of individuals and of the associational groups to which they belong. The analysis of the resulting data set considered the extent to which various group characteristics (such as demographic diversity, in-group trust, and engagement level) are related to the generalized trust of the members. The results indicate that more diverse, more engaged voluntary associations, and those with weak ties, indeed accommodate more trusting people. In particular, time spent in groups with foreigners, or in groups with weaker ties, affects the generalized trust levels of the members.

KEY WORDS: generalized trust; in-group trust; membership diversity; membership in voluntary associations; social capital

The social capital school has proposed that one of the important mechanisms for generating good democratic outcomes is participation in networks of voluntary associations (Putnam, 1993, 1995a, 1995b). In his study of Italy, Putnam regarded the density of membership in associations as one indicator of regional social capital,[1] showing powerfully the effects of different levels of membership density on several societal outcomes and on the effectiveness of government performance

[1] The nature of the concept of social capital is that it entails several components and therefore several ways of measurement. To Putnam, social capital consists of three components—networks of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and trust—all of which stand in a simultaneous relationship to each other.

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