

Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy:

▪ *A New CDATS Survey* ▪

CDATS has recently carried out a major study of American civic engagement in comparative perspective. The “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy” (CID) survey, which was conducted between mid-May and mid-July of 2005, consisted of in-person interviews with a representative sample of 1,001 Americans, who responded to an 83-minute questionnaire.

The project also represents a loose collaboration between CDATS and the European Social Survey (ESS), an award-winning cross-national survey that has been conducted biannually since 2002. The result of this project is that the U.S. can now be included in comparative perspective to the 23 European countries from the 2002 version of the ESS.

In addition to the replicated questions from the 2002 ESS, which contained specialized “modules” on civic engagement and immigration, the American version of the survey includes new and innovative questions—particularly related to the themes of informal social networks, the composition and diversity of ties and associations, democratic values, and tolerance—all of which are connected to lively debates about civic engagement, social capital, and democracy. In short, the survey provides an unusually rich perspective on citizen participation in both the public and private realms.

For more on the U.S. CID survey, including the questionnaire and codebook, readers can consult the project’s website at <http://uscidsurvey.org/>. The data are currently being checked and analyzed by the project’s advisory committee members. Updates about the project, as well as initial results and findings, will continue to be posted on the site over the course of the spring and summer of 2006. The data will be publicly released at the end of the summer.

The short articles below represent the preliminary analyses of three of the CID advisory committee members. In the first piece, Marc Morjé Howard makes use of the comparative data to argue that despite the recent ascendancy of pessimistic views about decline, American civic engagement remains very strong when viewed in comparative perspective. Russell Dalton addresses the

norms of citizenship, showing that the decline measured by Robert Putnam and others refers mainly to a more traditional, “duty”-based view of citizenship. According to Dalton, this drop has been counter-balanced by an increase in “engaged” citizenship, which he views as an encouraging development for the vitality of American democracy. Finally, Eric Oliver and Shang Ha focus on the issue of racial diversity and articulate an important challenge to theories of social capital. Contrary to the assumption that civic participation will lead to greater racial harmony, they find that the highest levels of participation are situated in segregated and homogeneous areas, while diverse communities have much lower levels of involvement.

These three pieces only touch on a few of the themes that are included in the U.S. CID survey. Nonetheless, they should give readers a sense of the remarkable breadth and depth of this important study. It is our hope that the CID dataset will become widely used by scholars who come from a variety of different intellectual perspectives, but who share an interest in better understanding the form and character of American civic engagement.

ARTICLE 1

American Civic Engagement in Comparative Perspective

Marc Morjé Howard, Georgetown University

ARTICLE 2

The Two Faces of Citizenship

Russell J. Dalton, University of California, Irvine

ARTICLE 3

Examining the Civic Paradoxes of Racial Segregation

Eric Oliver and Shang Ha, University of Chicago

American Civic Engagement in Comparative Perspective

MARC MORJÉ HOWARD

Georgetown University

The study of American civic engagement over the past two centuries has resulted in two distinct—though not entirely contradictory—perspectives, each of which comes from a different time period. The long-standing view has emphasized the pattern of “American exceptionalism,” according to which the United States is unique because of its high levels of civic engagement. In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that “Americans of all ages, of all stations in life, and all types of disposition, are forever forming associations.” And a century later, in 1944, Arthur Schlesinger Sr. referred to the U.S. as “A Nation of Joiners,” emphasizing the long-standing patterns of associationalism and civic engagement in American culture.

A second view, however, has captured the attention of contemporary researchers during the past decade. It stresses the theme of “American decline.” Robert Putnam launched the new debate in 1995 with his somewhat impressionistic articles “Bowling Alone” and “The Strange Disappearance of Civic America.” These were followed by a very detailed and systematic account in his book *Bowling Alone*, published in 2000, in which he shows that civic engagement has declined along many dimensions since the 1950s and 1960s. Other eminent scholars, including Theda Skocpol, William Galston, and most recently Stephen Macedo and his co-authors in *Democracy at Risk*, have also written about this American decline.

While the recent discussion of “American decline” has reinvigorated Tocqueville’s focus on civic engagement, it has caused many people to forget about its presupposition, i.e., the theme of “American exceptionalism.” For all their debt to the letter of Tocqueville’s text, these studies have generally not examined the U.S. in comparison to other countries. This article therefore proposes a step in redressing this imbalance, by examining the U.S. CID data to see how the U.S. compares to a host of European countries that were included in the 2002 European Social Survey (ESS). In addition,

since generational change is a major component of the “American decline” argument, I will attempt to discern any generational differences which could portend future trends in civic engagement—though, of course, caution must always be used when interpreting generational differences since people may change over the course of their lifetime.

For the sake of simplicity, I present some preliminary results comparing the U.S. to two groups of countries: Western Europe (consisting of the 15 “older” EU member-states, along with Norway and Switzerland) and Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia). The pooling of data into these two groups obviously overlooks numerous differences between the countries in each category, but it allows for an efficient first cut at putting the U.S. into a broader comparative perspective. As for generational differences, the results below break down the samples into three main age groups: under 35, 35-54, and 55 and over.

The figures present the results by country-grouping and generation on the following four concepts, all of which are at the core of debates about civic engagement: 1) interpersonal trust; 2) political action; 3) participation in voluntary organizations; and 4) religious attendance. For each figure, I want to focus on two dimensions: a) how the U.S. compares on aggregate to Western Europe and Eastern Europe; and b) what the generational differences may suggest in terms of future trends.

Figure 1 is based on the standard interpersonal trust question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” On the CID/ESS, respondents could specify their level of trust on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores representing higher levels of trust. The figure shows that the U.S. actually has slightly higher interpersonal trust scores than Western Europe, and much higher than Eastern Europe—though of course there is great variation within Europe (e.g., Nordics are very trusting, South Europeans are not). There are also large generational differences. As opposed to the typical generational pattern on civic engagement measures in Western Europe, where the middle generation is the highest, each American generation is less trusting than its elders. This difference seems to provide support for Putnam’s argument about generational differences and continuing American decline.

Figure 2 presents the results on a more behavioral measure. Respondents were asked whether, in the last 12 months, they had done any of the following 10 different kinds of political activities: 1) Contacted a poli-

tician or a local government official; 2) Worked in a political party or group; 3) Worked in another political organization or association; 4) Worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker; 5) Signed a petition; 6) Taken part in a lawful public demonstration; 7) Boycotted certain products; 8) Deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons; 9) Donated money to a political organization or group; or 10) Participated in illegal protest activities. The results shown in Figure 2 present the average number of “yes” answers per person. We see that, on aggregate, political action is higher in the U.S. than in Western Europe, and again much more so than in Eastern Europe. But in the U.S. it is still lower for younger generations—unlike in Western and Eastern Europe, where the more “typical” pattern of higher involvement by the middle generation holds—which may be another indicator of ongoing decline.

Figure 3 turns to voluntary organizations, which are at the core of almost all definitions of civil society and social capital. Unlike most other surveys, the CID/ESS actually has a measure of *participation*, rather than simply membership, a distinction that is important for theories of social capital and civil society, which stress the positive consequences of face-to-face interaction, rather than passive or “checkbox” membership. The figure presents the average number of organizations in which each respondent participates, in response to a list of 12 types of organizations. In comparative perspective, the U.S. comes out just ahead of Western Europe, and, not surprisingly, well above Eastern Europe. But in terms of generational differences, unlike the other measures, this time the younger generation seems to be defying the pattern of having lower levels of participations. This suggests that younger people may prefer informal participation rather than formal membership. In any case, this noteworthy exception points to the need for more research on informal participation, particularly among young people, before reaching any firm conclusions.

Although religious activity was certainly not a part of Hegelian or Marxian interpretations of civil society, it was central to Tocqueville’s characterization of the U.S. Figure 4 therefore shows the percentage of people who attend religious services at least once a week (focusing on the U.S. and Western Europe only). This time, unlike the other figures, which show roughly similar levels of engagement in the U.S. and Western Europe, we see a very clear difference. Church attendance is much higher in the U.S., as 34% of Americans attend services at least once a week, compared to 16% in Europe. That said, religious attendance is also dropping quite sharply by generation in both the U.S. and Western Europe, but

this is difficult to interpret, since people typically become more religious over their lifespan. Nonetheless, on aggregate, it is clear that in terms of religion, American exceptionalism remains very strong.

This brief examination of American civic engagement in comparison to Europe provides an important perspective that has largely been neglected by those who stress its “disappearance.” Despite the well-documented decline of the past few decades, and notwithstanding the fact that generational patterns seem to indicate the potential for further decline (with the important exception of organizational participation), the evidence presented here shows that in comparative terms, civic engagement in America is still alive and well. While the extent of American exceptionalism may have diminished, civic engagement in the U.S. is certainly still within the “normal” level among today’s advanced democracies, and it is even on the high end on many measures. This finding suggests that bold titles and catchphrases that give the impression of a truly catastrophic situation are somewhat exaggerated. The reality is more nuanced. On the whole, despite any decline that may have taken place, American civic engagement is still comparatively strong.

Figure 1:
Interpersonal Trust
(mean of 0-10 scale)

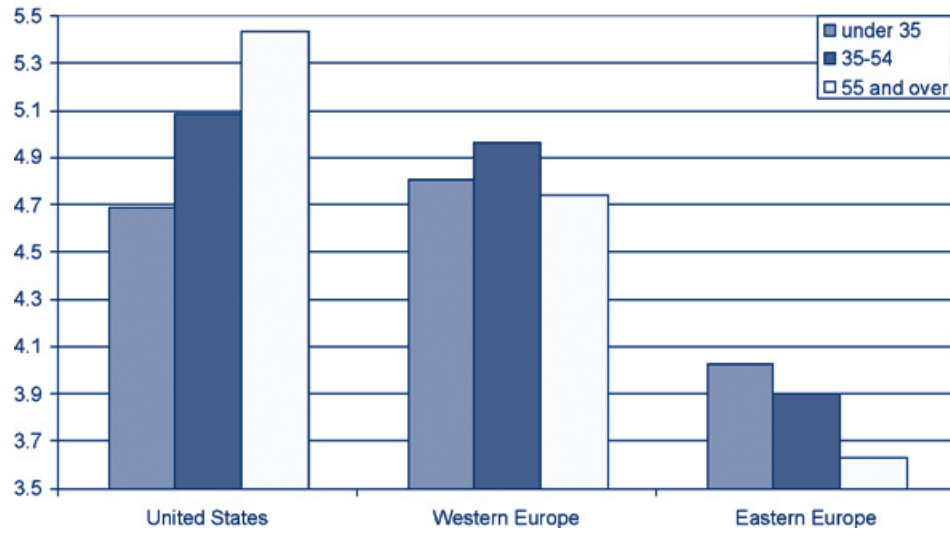


Figure 2:
Political Action
(mean of "yes" answers to
10 types of activities)

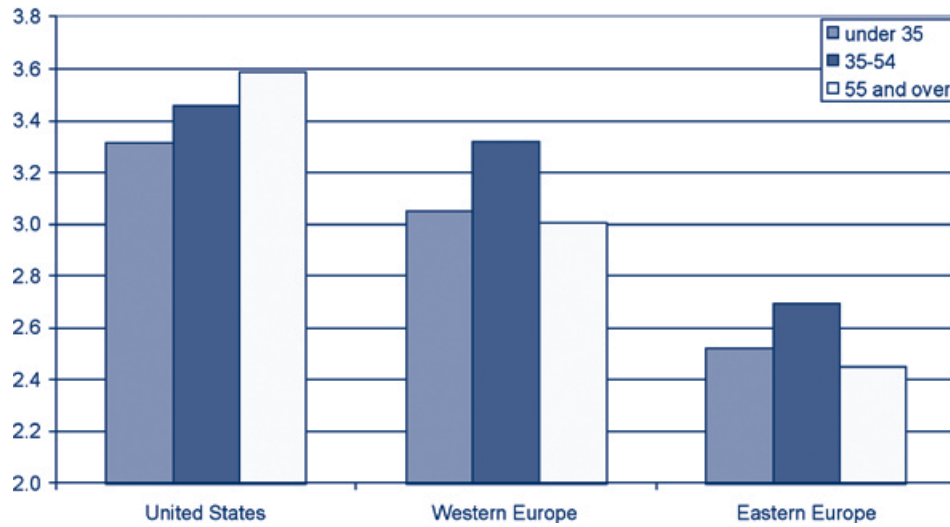


Figure 3:
Participation in
Voluntary Organizations
(number of organiza-
tions in which every re-
spondent participates)

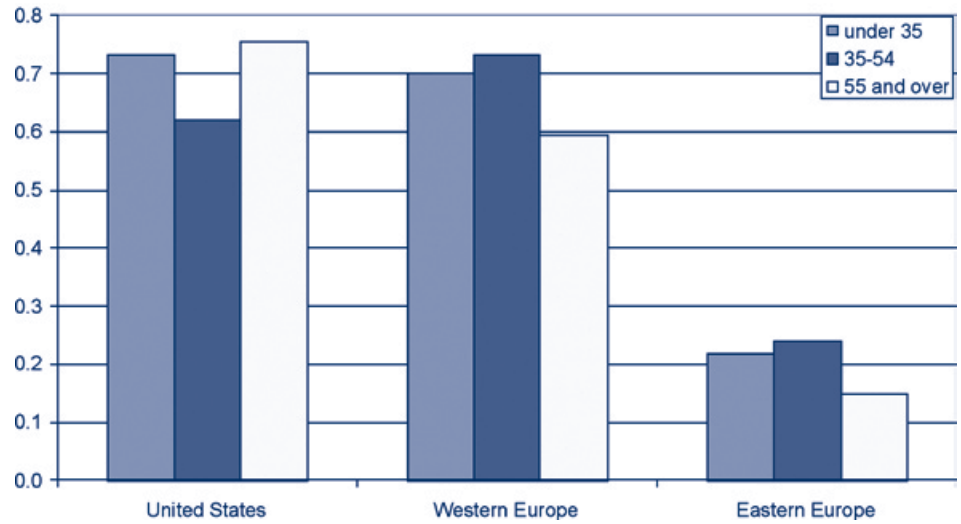
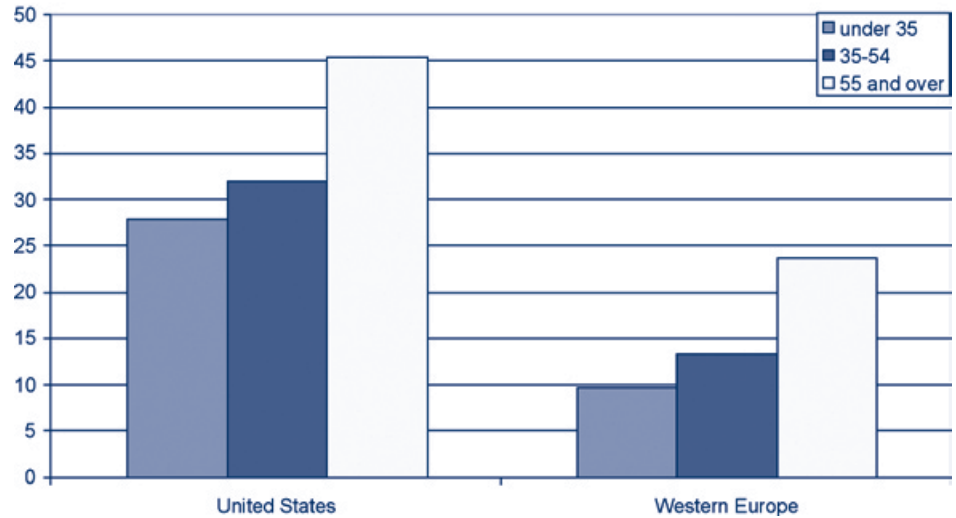


Figure 4:
Religious Attendance
(% attending once a week
or more)



The Two Faces of Citizenship

RUSSELL J. DALTON

University of California, Irvine

At his inauguration in 2001, with prompting from prominent political scientists, George W. Bush stated: “I ask you to be citizens. Citizens, not spectators. Citizens, not subjects. Responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character.” Bush’s comments reflect an ongoing debate about citizenship in America. A growing list of political analysts maintain that too few of us are voting, we are disconnected from our fellow citizens and lacking in social capital, we are losing our national identity, we are losing faith in our government, the nation is in social chaos, and the list goes on seemingly ad infinitum. The lack of “good” citizenship is often used to describe or explain these phenomena.

The U.S. CID survey has probed into the meaning of citizenship to Americans, and the consequences of these norms. This article outlines some of our findings that contradict the dire claims that American democracy is at risk because of the lack of good citizenship.

Two Meanings of Citizenship

Political theorists—republicans, liberals, neo-liberals, communitarians, social-democrats, and others—differ substantially in their definitions of citizenship. To probe how Americans actually think about citizenship, the CID survey asks: “To be a good citizen, how important is it for a person to be . . . [list items]. 0 is extremely unimportant and 10 is extremely important.” The survey examines norms in four areas:

- **Participation:** the importance of voting in elections, being active in voluntary groups, and general political activity.
- **Autonomy:** the importance of forming one’s own opinions.
- **Social Order:** obeying laws and regulations, serving on a jury, reporting a crime, and serving in the military.
- **Solidarity:** the importance of helping others who are worse off in society.

Although there is a rich philosophical discussion of these categories, the American public perceives citizenship in terms of a simpler framework. The items align along two dimensions that are described in Table 1. To one group of Americans, citizenship means principles

of **Citizen Duty**. This involves norms of social order and the duty of voting. This is the classic citizen-subject that is well known in the political culture literature—and we suspect this is the pattern of citizenship that George Bush had in mind at his inaugural.

In contrast, **Engaged Citizenship** spans several elements that are typically described as liberal or communitarian norms of citizenship. It includes both measures of solidarity, as well as two participation examples: being active in civil society groups and general political activity. This dimension also incorporates the norm of political autonomy. The engaged citizen appears willing to act on his/her principles, be politically independent, and address social needs.

Table 1. The Two Dimensions of Citizenship

CITIZEN DUTY	ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP
Vote in elections	Be active in voluntary organizations
Serve on a jury if called	Be active in politics
Always obey laws and regulations	Form opinion, independently of others
Men serve in the military when the country is at war	Support people who are worse off than themselves
Report a crime that he or she may have witnessed	

These two sets of norms are not contradictory, and all are cited as important by most Americans, but they reflect contrasting emphases in the role of a democratic citizen. And as one might expect, seniors and Republicans emphasize a duty-based definition of citizenship. Younger Americans, Democrats and minorities stress engaged citizenship. There are two faces of citizenship in America, with distinctly different emphases, and opinions are shifting from duty-based citizenship to engaged citizenship.

The Consequences of Citizenship Norms

Much of the current discourse on citizenship focuses on the presumed erosion of the norms of citizen duty: Americans today are less respectful of authority, more distrustful of government, and less likely to vote—and these developments may be linked to the erosion of duty-based citizenship. But this is only half the story. The decline of duty-based citizenship is counterbalanced by the rise of engaged citizenship, which has its own consequences for citizen actions. To understand contemporary American democracy, we need to examine both.

The implications of changing citizenship norms can be seen in three examples: participation patterns, volunteering beyond politics, and political tolerance.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Since Putnam's influential book *Bowling Alone*, researchers have stressed the decreasing citizen involvement in elections and other forms of participation—and argued that citizenship norms have contributed to this pattern. The 2005 CID survey examined participation in fourteen different political activities. As we might expect, citizen duty encourages Americans to show up on election day and participate in election campaigns. However, citizen duty discourages participation in protest and other contentious forms of action.

In contrast, engaged citizenship is only weakly related to voting turnout and electoral participation. But it stimulates contentious action, such as signing a petition, attending a protest, boycotting, or internet-based actions. Those high in engaged citizenship characteristics are five times more likely to protest than those who score low in these norms.

Thus, norm-shift is transforming the patterns of political action in America. A revival of duty-based citizenship might increase electoral participation, but it would also strengthen the normative impediment to alternative forms of political action. Engaged citizens have a different repertoire of political action, and this is a positive feature of norm shift.

VOLUNTEERING AND CITIZENSHIP

A *Los Angeles Times* article on the annual UCLA survey of college freshmen began with a story of a university student who spent his fall break as a volunteer helping to salvage homes flooded by Hurricane Katrina. He organized a group with other students volunteers to give up their break to do hard labor in a devastated region. The message of the article was that volunteering was at its highest percentage in the 25 years of the UCLA college survey.

This experience stands in marked contrast to the recent drumbeat of negativity about the civic involvement of Americans. We are told by political scientists and presidents that Americans are not “good citizens” as they once were, and more civic engagement and citizenship is needed. To test the civic spirit of Americans, the CID survey asked four questions about volunteerism:

- Are you registered as an organ donor
- Have you donated blood in the last five years
- Have you given to charity in the last year
- Have you picked up someone else's litter in the last year

Ironically, our analyses show that the duty-based citizenship does not encourage volunteerism. Once one's duty to obey the law and participate in voting has been fulfilled, civic engagement stops. Thus, the renewal of traditional duty-based norms—which is often the message of contemporary pundits—will not produce many of the civic results they seek. Conversely, engaged citizenship encompasses norms of greater social concern and social engagement. Thus, those who score highly on engaged citizenship are about twice as likely as those at the low end of the scale to perform at least three of these volunteer activities.

NORM-SHIFT AND TOLERANCE

Listening to the pundits, one would conclude that America is an intolerant and divided nation. Indeed, following the terrorist attacks after September 2001, passage of the Patriot Act and other government actions to combat terrorism have renewed the debates on the balance between security and civil liberties in America.

Surprisingly absent from discussions of citizenship is the impact of citizenship norms on political tolerance. A duty-based image of citizenship, stressing citizen obligations to the state and participation through elections, may be less accepting of dissenting political views, and expect that the “good citizen” conforms to social norms. In contrast, engaged citizenship may evoke more sensitivity toward challenging political groups and thereby encourage feelings of tolerance—even to groups that hold contrasting political values.

The CID survey first asks respondents to identify their least liked group from a list provided by the interviewer. The identification of the least-liked group differs across the two dimensions of citizenship. Those high in citizen duty most often mention the Klu Klux Klan (34 percent), radical Muslims (19 percent), people who are against churches and religions (12 percent), and American Nazis (9 percent). Those high in citizen engagement have a similar set of least-liked groups in a slightly different order: the Klu Klux Klan (52 percent), American Nazis (11 percent), radical Muslims (8 percent), and those against churches and religions (7 percent).

Then, the survey asked whether the most disliked group should be allowed to make a speech in the community, should be banned from running for public office, or should be allowed to hold rallies in the community. The norms of engaged citizenship significantly increase tolerance of even the “most-disliked” groups. Conversely, citizen duty generates a slight decline in political tolerance. In short, norm shift is increasing political tolerance in America, which strengthens the foundation of our democratic process.

In conclusion, some political experts may look back to the 1950s as a golden age of American politics and want to renew duty-based norms of citizenship. This essay argues that this retrospective definition of citizenship is too narrow—it ignores the potential negative elements of these norms, and the potential gains from other definitions of citizenship. Americans are renewing their commitment to good citizenship, but to a model of citizenship that is substantially different from what Bush envisioned in his inaugural address. Norm shift will change the nature of American politics—with both positive and negative effects. Instead of seeking the norms of the past, we should examine how norm shift might strengthen the democratic process.

Examining the Civic Paradoxes of Racial Segregation

ERIC OLIVER AND SHANG HA

University of Chicago

Over the past decade, two major trends have caused great alarm among observers of American democracy. The first is the well-documented decline in American social capital. According to scholars of civic engagement, Americans are becoming less active in voluntary civic associations and are spending more discretionary time in isolated pursuits such as watching television. The second trend is the persistent segregation and racial tension among America's new different groups—across most neighborhoods, cities, and suburbs, whites, blacks, and Latinos continue to live more apart than together.

We believe these two trends are not only connected, but that they lie at the heart of many challenges facing American society. Take, for example, the impact of civic participation on people's racial attitudes. According to social psychologists, civic associations may be the ideal location for promoting positive interracial contact: the equal status of members, shared goals, and cooperative work endeavors make them ideal sites for promoting interracial understanding. If Americans are less likely to participate in such organizations, their opportunities for interracial contact may be lower.

Or consider the apprehension that many observers have regarding the growth of immigrant populations and America's national identity. Over the past three decades,

a tremendous influx of Latino and Asian immigrants has made the United States more ethnically and racially diverse than at any time in its history. If voluntary associations are a crucial mechanism for civic and social integration of immigrant groups, then it is important to recognize how their residential patterns and social environments may influence their opportunities for civic involvement.

Despite the importance of these issues, social scientists have little clear idea about how people's racial surroundings affect their civic participation. The limited previous research on this question offers both incomplete and contradictory answers. Some studies demonstrate that racial diversity can boost civic participation; other studies find that, in heterogeneous metropolitan areas and counties, people participate less in civic associations, spend less time in voluntary activities, and show less willingness to help others.

Much of this ambiguity was due to poor data. Until recently, we simply did not have sufficient data on a large sample of Americans to know whether or how their racial environments were affecting their civic activities. Fortunately, the recent CID survey provides an ideal vehicle for examining this issue. Given the battery of items about the exact nature of people's civic lives as well as the geocodes for each respondent, we were able to estimate how much the difference in people's civic behaviors and feelings of community varied by the racial composition of their metropolitan areas and neighborhoods.

We find that the relationship between civic participation and racial segregation presents a paradox for those concerned with promoting racial equality. On the one hand, racial segregation, at least for the white majority, corresponds with higher levels of civic engagement. Whites who live in predominantly white neighborhoods and metropolitan areas are generally more active in their voluntary organizations than those in integrated contexts. Such higher levels of participation are attributable to the correspondingly higher levels of social connection that whites feel in such settings. Whites in predominantly white neighborhoods show higher levels of social trust, have more social acquaintances, and report a greater feeling of belonging in their communities. These results yield the uncomfortable conclusion that, for whites at least, racial segregation enhances their civic engagement. For other groups, the results are less consistent: African Americans and Latinos living in predominantly white neighborhoods tend to feel socially alienated, but social disconnectedness is not necessarily

Oliver and Ha, *Continued on Page 29*

Although I appreciate his acknowledgement of many forms of political participation, his work does not cover other important modes of participation, such as running for political office, nor more modern modes of activity like participation on electronic chat boards, blog writing, and other new forms especially popular among youth. Secondly, his focus on threat as a stimulant for voting is interesting, but it points to the importance of the newly threatened group post-9/11 that he mentions only briefly: Arab-Americans. Although their numbers may not be significant enough for this type of empirical analysis, further study of their situation is clearly necessary. Thirdly, I was struck by the crucial importance of racial identification, as Ramakrishnan assigns immigrants into four distinct racial groups: white, black, Latino, and Asian American. He does not raise the issue of the problematic nature of racial identification until the very last sentence of his book. The classification of individuals into different racial groups is obviously quite problematic, especially with the overlap between these categories, intermarriage, and conflicting identities. Ramakrishnan writes repeatedly of racial inequalities, but there is little theoretical discussion of race in a sociological sense.

Ramakrishnan has written a thorough and well-researched book that provides important tests of the factors that influence immigrant political behavior. This is a timely and fascinating topic whose complexity is managed quite effectively by the author, not only along the racial and national-origin lines, but also regarding the concentration in specific states. Hopefully this type of work will motivate more national political surveys to ask immigrant-status-related questions, so that we can come to a greater understanding of this important issue. This book is an interesting read that addresses the issue of immigrant participation from a comprehensive standpoint.

linked with a low level of civic engagement, especially for blacks.

On the other hand, these patterns of civic engagement may not be providing many of the benefits of social capital, particularly regarding race relations. Although whites in segregated places may be more civically active and socially connected—a putative prerequisite for promoting interracial understanding—their civic activities and social networks tend to be more segregated. The possible benefits that higher levels of civic activity could provide for building interracial understanding are undercut by the racial isolation in which it takes place.

These findings highlight the challenges of building social capital in multiracial and multiethnic societies. As America becomes more racially diverse, the demands for increasing social capital and fostering interracial understanding will become more pressing. Voluntary civic organizations should be a crucial instrument in achieving both of these goals—not only can they promote social capital and trust, they are ideal settings for fostering positive interracial contact. The problem is that enhanced participation tends to occur in segregated contexts. Ironically, the people who are most active (i.e., people in segregated neighborhoods) are less likely to contact people of other races. As long as integration stifles civic participation and segregation leads to segregated civic and social experiences, the challenges for creating sites for positive interracial contact become all the greater. Genuine social and racial integration may be the ultimate expression of American aspirations toward true equality, but achieving this integration may come at a cost to America's stock of social capital, at least in the short run.