

National Elections as Institutions for Generating Social Capital

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## ABSTRACT

Using data from the 1996 National Election Study, we examine the impact of campaign-related variables on changes in three individual-level orientations that contribute to social capital: generalized trust in others, trust in government, and external political efficacy. We distinguish four types of election-related effects: political mobilization, psychological and behavioral involvement in the campaign, solidarity ritual, and qualities of the campaign and the candidates. We find, first, that there were significant changes in all three orientations in a social-capital enhancing direction in the aftermath of the 1996 election. Second, each of the three orientations was enhanced by different aspects of the campaign. Finally, these three orientations are locked in a causal system, such that changes in one induce changes in the others. We discuss implications of these results for theories of social capital.

The concept of social capital has proven to be enormously attractive to scholars in a wide variety of disciplines. Many political scientists have deliberated about how to identify a role for political institutions in the production of social capital. Effective institutions are not just one of the many unintended blessings of a vigorous civil society; rather, political authority that performs well and equitably contributes to the “trust, norms, and networks” (Putnam 1993:167) that enable people to solve collective action problems. (Kenworthy 1997; Levi 1996; Tarrow 1996). Institutions that require more citizen input may also provide an impetus for people to become engaged in something other than their private lives (Schneider, et al. 1997). In this chapter, we examine national elections as political institutions that may contribute to the production of social capital. We begin by describing three attitudinal orientations that we believe to be part of a social capital dynamic. We then hypothesize four ways in which elections may have an impact on these components of social capital. Finally, we examine these mechanisms using the 1996 American National Election Study.

### ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Once the ballots have been counted, do elections have any lingering effects on the American polity? One way in which the effects of elections persist is through the policy changes that may be enacted as a result of leadership turnover (e.g., Brady and Stewart 1991). Our focus on elections, however, is not on their direct outcomes, but rather the changes that may be wrought in the larger civic culture as a result of both the practical conduct of elections and their larger symbolic significance. After reviewing the empirical evidence for election-based change in civic attitudes, we present several hypotheses—which are not mutually exclusive—about ways in which elections may improve citizens’ orientations toward the larger political community.

Our investigation is founded on two earlier empirical treatments of the origins of social capital (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Berger and Brehm 1997). In each of these papers, we examined the reciprocal relationship between elements of the civic culture—namely civic engagement and abstract social trust—and political culture, defined by citizens’ attitudes toward government. These papers reflect our belief that some forms of social capital, particularly as manifested in widespread generalized trust, cannot be the product of purely “bottom-up” interaction among

citizens. Instead, the performance of political institutions and people's confidence in them can play a large role in generating social solidarity.

Our account in this chapter begins with the observation that we are studying social capital in an advanced democracy:

A fundamental presumption of democracy is that citizens will feel that collectively, and sometimes even individually, they can intervene in public life to affect the course of their governance. Hence, in a democracy the individual's assessment of whether or not he and his fellow citizens have any influence in politics becomes in effect an assessment of whether or not a definitive feature of the regime is intact (Madsen 1978:869).

Political efficacy beliefs signify to citizens something about the nature of their society and the nature of its political authorities. The most visible sign to citizens that political authority is organized democratically, and hence they have opportunities for influence, is the regular occurrence of competitive elections (Madsen 1978).

People's feelings about authorities, in particular whether these authorities can be trusted, depend, in part, on whether citizens believe they can exercise influence over them. The real or anticipated consequences of citizen control provide democratic leaders with an *ex ante* incentive to behave in a trustworthy manner (Levi, forthcoming). Thus feelings of inefficacy may lead citizens to doubt the trustworthiness of their authorities. To the extent that people use their beliefs about authorities to make inferences about their own status in a group (Tyler 1997), distrust of government officials undermines a sense of social identification with the larger group, an identification that facilitates trust in other group members. In addition, citizens may reason from their own lack of trust in authorities that other citizens have little incentive to obey the rules voluntarily; therefore, other people can't be trusted. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy: as the legitimacy of authority erodes, it becomes a less credible third-party enforcer of contracts, its ability to punish "defectors" is reduced, and it is less able to secure voluntary obedience to group rules. In short, it becomes less capable of performing the functions that make it a generator of trust (Levi, forthcoming).

We are, then, postulating a model in which beliefs about 1) one's own efficacy, 2) the trustworthiness of political authority and 3) of other people are tightly bound together in modern democracies. National elections, as arenas in which these beliefs are enacted, may provide an

important institutional mechanism for undergirding the political-cultural attitudes associated with high levels of social capital, even in the absence of genuine face-to-face interaction (see note 7 below). This is especially likely to be true in democracies, such as the U.S., where political institutions and values are central components of citizens' national identities (Almond and Verba 1963/89; Spillman 1997)

#### THE 1996 ELECTION: EVIDENCE FOR SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CHANGE

Fortunately, our account of elections can be studied using national survey data. In 1996, the American National Election Studies (NES) asked several questions relevant to our argument in both its pre-election and post-election interviews. Since these interviews were conducted with the same people, we can detect individual-level attitude change and its direction. Three questions dealt with perceptions of “most” people—whether they were generally trustworthy, fair, or similar to oneself in basic values and beliefs. Another question asked about the individual's level of influence in governmental decision making, the “no say” external efficacy item (Craig, Niemi and Silver 1990). A fifth repeated question asked about how often government could be trusted to do the right thing.<sup>1</sup>

—Table 1 here—

Tables 1a to 1e present the crosstabulation of pre- with post-interview responses to these five questions.<sup>2</sup> There is some net change in a positive direction for four of the five questions, especially for the general trust question. Before the election, only 40% of those interviewed reported that most people could be trusted,<sup>3</sup> while over half of the post-election respondents offered a trusting response. Most remarkable is that there is essentially no change in the distrusting direction. Very few individuals who were trusting in the first wave changed their views, while over a quarter of initially cautious respondents were trusters in the post-election interview. The question about whether people are fair does not demonstrate as much net change, but the pattern is essentially similar to the general trust question. The external efficacy and government trust items also show small net changes in a positive direction, with more pronounced improvement in efficacy levels. Unlike the social trust questions, however, these two orientations show more substantial change in a “backwards” direction; that is, a sizeable minority of

respondents who were initially trusting of government or efficacious became less so in the post-election interview. The level of perceived similarity of others to self remains virtually unchanged in the two interviews, even though responses are less stable. Although the question does not demonstrate an election effect, we will later use the perceived similarity question to test specific hypotheses about the origins of social solidarity in modern democratic systems.

#### ELECTION-BASED EXPLANATIONS FOR CHANGE

The object of study for the present analysis is *change* in social trust, trust in government, and external efficacy from the pre-election to post-election interview (as opposed to the level of trust, the object of our previous study [Brehm and Rahn 1997]). While it is impossible to isolate the election and campaign themselves as causes, the NES pre- and post-election data is a powerful quasi-experimental control. It is hard to imagine any other cause with impact wide and ubiquitous enough to account for broad shifts in social trust over a short two-month period (the pre-election interview was administered from September 3 to November 4).<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, we hold that the relatively boring, low turnout 1996 case is a good opportunity to test the effect of elections in general, since there were at work neither powerful forces of social unrest to reduce the hypothetical benefits of elections nor a rampant political euphoria to boost them. Table 2 documents a number of measures of the most recent presidential elections, drawn from the NES. Respondents in 1996 reported being less interested in the campaign than in 1992, but more than other recent years. Respondents consumed slightly less TV about the campaign and reported voting less, but were more likely to be contacted by a political party, to be better informed about politics, and to have found at least one positive trait for both presidential candidates. The differences between the 1996 election and prior, recent elections are small and inconsistent. In effect, the 1996 election may be as close to *ceteris paribus* as possible, until future cases with the same variables allow us to “control” for other causes.

—Table 2 here—

There are at least four classes of potential hypotheses accounting for change: political mobilization, campaign involvement, qualities of the campaign or candidates, and the election ritual.

## Political mobilization

While others have examined the impact of political mobilization on political participation (chiefly Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), our hypothesis about its effects is somewhat different. Like many others who write on social capital, we draw on Tocqueville's analysis in *Democracy in America* for inspiration. Discussions of Tocqueville often overlook the primacy of politics, politicians, and political associations as the engines of vigorous civil society in his thinking (Foley and Edwards 1997). Political associations were "the great free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association" (de Tocqueville 1835/1969:522). And elections, despite "the dishonorable means often used by candidates and the calumnies spread by their enemies" were a means of bringing people together, which Tocqueville viewed as useful in combating individualism and the social isolation it encouraged:

Eagerness to be elected may, for the moment, make particular men fight each other, but in the long run, this same aspiration induces mutual helpfulness on the part of all; and while it may happen that the accident of an election estranges two friends, the electoral system forges permanent links between a great number of citizens who might otherwise have remained forever strangers to one another.  
(p. 510)

In other words, political mobilization may contribute to social capital—not because it stimulates people to become involved in the political process (which it surely does, see Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), but because it brings people into contact who otherwise would have no reason to meet. Thus, social capital may be created as a "by-product" of activities undertaken for other purposes (Coleman 1990). The "permanent links" Tocqueville describes are not elucidated in his discussion, but we may assume that he was referring to the functional relationship supporters of candidates have to each other; they need each other in order to achieve the same goal.

This Tocquevillean hypothesis also presents the potential for reconciliation between Putnam (1993) and one of his most insightful critics. Tarrow (1996) proposes that the "operative cause" of differences in government performance between northern and southern Italy are "neither cultural nor associational but political," because "civic competence was deliberately developed after World War II as a symbol of the left-wing parties' governing capacity." (p. 394) Our

hypothesis suggests that political mobilization *is* a political-cultural phenomenon. Tarrow and Putnam are both right: political mobilization itself may create and maintain social capital. We test this generic mobilization hypothesis by including in our model whether the respondent was urged to register or turn out to vote.

Political parties, in particular, forge links among people that are extensive both geographically and psychologically. While this form of party mobilization, whose historic origins coincide with Tocqueville's travels to America (see Aldrich, 1995, on the development of the modern mass political party), risks becoming anachronistic in today's candidate-centered political world (see, e.g., Aldrich 1995; Coleman 1996), it is still the case that a substantial fraction of people (ranging from the high teens in other surveys to almost 30% in the 1996 NES data) are contacted by the political parties in election years.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in the type of contact initiated by party representatives, people interact on the basis of their *shared citizenship role*, which, as a common political identity, may facilitate a type of trust that does not depend on personal ties of attachment to specific group members, but rather is based on an "imagined community" of members (Conover and Hicks, in press). Such depersonalized trust, which is reinforced by the institutionalized rules that govern elections, may be a prerequisite for democratic processes, given that the nature of the contacts between citizens and parties can involve conflicts of opinion. Non-party forms of campaign contact may also have an impact on feelings of trust, but because they are often initiated by interests that are more narrowly drawn than the political parties, their potential to form "permanent linkages" among people may be limited. In our empirical model, we will specifically compare party and non-party forms of campaign contact.

### Campaign Involvement

We distinguish three ways in which campaigns may involve citizens: psychologically, behaviorally, and through the use of the ballot box.

Campaigns aim to attract people's attention, and the more "noise" the better, according to some analysts (e.g., Popkin 1991). Some campaigns do this better than others. For example, in 1992, interest in the campaign—due to the off-again, on-again Perot candidacy, the state of the



economy, the closeness of the race, and innovations in campaign communication, among other things—grew steadily throughout the spring and summer, peaking right before election day (Frankovic 1993), helping to reverse the two-decade slide in turnout (Nichols and Beck 1995; Rosenstone, et al. 1993). Interest in the 1996 campaign, as measured in the NES pre-election interview, was down considerably from 1992 levels; only 27.2% reported being “very interested” compared to 39.5% four years earlier (see Table 2 above). We operationalize campaign interest as a latent variable, “psychological engagement,” in our model.

By engaging people in the process of selecting leadership, campaigns may make people feel more connected to the political process. Election campaigns also provide people with ways to participate in politics, from placing a yard sign in their lawn to attending a rally for a favorite candidate. These activities may provide tangible evidence of one’s potential to influence election outcomes, and therefore, contribute to more positive assessments of the political system. This variety of participation is also constructed as a latent variable, “behavioral engagement,” in the model.

Finally, by providing people with the opportunity to exercise the franchise, elections provide citizens with a means of influence, however blunt. Going to vote may remind people that they do have such opportunities. In addition, to the extent voting is also accompanied by social celebration (Pomper and Sernekos 1989), physically turning up at the voting place may also serve to integrate one into the community.

#### Qualities of the campaign, the candidates, and winning or losing

Another way in which campaigns are not created equal is in their “quality,” a vague term that we use to encompass a variety of different influences. For example, some contests are more vigorously contested than others. High-intensity campaigns provide voters with better information and allow them to base their choices on more substantive criteria. They also occasion more “noise,” and so may engage voters in the process to a greater degree. In part, these qualities may be mediated through indicators of psychological and behavioral involvement discussed above, but they may also operate directly. We use an aggregate measure of the

percentage vote margin between incumbent and challenging congressional candidates, imputed to the NES respondents by congressional district, to test this hypothesis.

Some campaigns may also feature “better” candidates. We focus on the presidential candidates, since the attitudes we are studying have the national political community as their focus. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993; see also Rosenstone, et al. 1993) find that turnout is stimulated when people have more favorable impressions of their preferred candidate, and Marcus and MacKuen (1993) find that positive feelings about *both* candidates lead to more interest in the campaign. Also relevant is the work of Citrin and colleagues (Citrin and Green 1996; Luks and Citrin 1997) which shows that the trait impressions citizens have of their political leaders are linked to their overall trust in government; more positive assessments of leadership qualities promotes more faith that government is in capable hands. Just as a hard-fought game between good opponents may leave sports fans with more appreciation for the institution of the game itself, a presidential race may lead to more attachment to the institutions that govern the contest, should citizens find that the contenders are both worthy of respect at the end of the battle. The NES allows us to apply this hypothesis with trait evaluations of Bill Clinton and Bob Dole.

Finally, some have argued that citizens’ sentiments about the political community are based on whether they are on the winning or losing side (Clark and Acock 1989; Anderson and Guillory 1997). Anderson and Guillory argue, however, that institutional arrangements, in particular, systems that are characterized by consensual institutions (Lijphart 1984), can act to buffer some of the discontent. Although the U.S. has majoritarian rather than consensual institutions, we believe that elections are institutions in which differences are settled according to established normative rules, and therefore, one of their chief functions is to bring the losers back into the community (Nadeau and Blais 1993). Therefore, while we explicitly test for the potential that seeing one’s preferred candidate lose can diminish support for the political community and its members, our expectation is that not getting what one wants is much less important than purely utilitarian accounts of civic support would suggest.

## Ritual of solidarity

Some analysts have taken a more sociological perspective on elections, viewing them as rituals of social integration (Edelman 1964, 1971; Bennett 1992). Campaigns, for example, can “bless” the winner, infuse a sense of hopefulness in the citizenry, restore institutional legitimacy, and bring people together (Zullo 1994). Some view the “spectacular” aspect of elections darkly, seeing them as institutions that delude and hoodwink citizens. Edelman, for example, writes that the campaign “encourages acceptance of a myth by the masses of political spectators: a myth of protected status and of policies based upon an objective standard of equity rather than relative bargaining resources.” (1971:22). And Weissberg (1975; see also Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978), finding no “reality-based” reason for a feelings of political efficacy, concludes that such sentiments are illusionary, “a convenient set of beliefs protecting elites from mass dissatisfaction” (p. 486).<sup>6</sup> Our perspective on the ritualistic aspect of elections is different: theorists of decision making (e.g., March and Olsen 1989; Feldman and March 1981) argue that symbols allow individuals to come to believe that the decisions they make are important, and worthy of their care.

What would we expect to see if indeed elections function, in part, as rituals? We advance several hypotheses, drawing on some of Emile Durkheim’s classic works on the nature of social cohesion: the idea that “representative rites” activate collective beliefs; that because individuals vary in the extent to which they are integrated, they also vary in exposure to the ritual; and that the extent to which people interact with others who occupy different social roles leads to “organic solidarity.” Elections may function as religious rites, but we claim that the normative beliefs embedded in the enactment of the election “rite” will not affect everyone equally.

In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915/1976), Durkheim argued that religion was “more than the idea of gods or spirits.” In any society, even modern ones, religion consists of a set of beliefs about the nature of the sacred, which he often called “collective representations,” and a set of rites, which are “rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of these sacred objects” (p. 41). Durkheim divides religious rites into two categories, negative and positive, and further specifies specific types of rites within each class.

Elections, in our view, take the form of *representative rites*, the function of which is to activate the important beliefs of the collective:

[T]he mythology of a group is the system of beliefs common to this group. The traditions whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents man and the world...So the rite serves and can serve only to sustain the vitality of these beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory, and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through it, the group periodically renews the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures (Durkheim 1915/1976:375).

As we discussed above, political efficacy beliefs are the cornerstone of the psychology of democracy. The election rite, then, should act to increase social solidarity if it is effective in reinforcing these beliefs. As an indicator of social bonds, the trust in people questions do seem to evince the pattern (a unidirectional shift) that we would expect to see if some event, which we believe is the election, acted to increase social cohesion.

We do not expect all election rituals to be equally effective; nor do we believe that all people are equally subject to the binding forces that rituals create.<sup>7</sup> The degree to which the ritual is able to promote a common focus of attention among participants is something that will vary. With respect to elections, this means that some of measures of campaign involvement, such as interest in the election, may also serve as indicators of the quality of the ritual. In other works (most notably *Suicide* [1897/1951]), Durkheim clearly recognizes that there is variation in the extent to which individuals are integrated into society. Some people will internalize the beliefs that are represented in the election rite more than others, and these people should be more likely to have them reawakened by the pageantry of the process. What sorts of people are most likely to be stirred?

We must begin with education, for reasons that have been articulated by others and analyzed extensively by Durkheim himself. For example, Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996) argue that one of the chief functions of education is to produce what they call *democratic enlightenment*, “those qualities of citizenship that encourage understanding of and adherence to norms and principles of democracy . . . . Enlightenment signifies an understanding of and commitment to the rules of the democratic game and tempers the unbridled pursuit of self-

interested political engagement” (p. 6). One of the major outcomes of democratic enlightenment is increased knowledge about politics (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Therefore, more political knowledge should lead to greater sensitivity to the collective sentiments aroused by the election. We operationalize political knowledge with a measure constructed from the survey respondents’ ability to identify the offices held by four major political figures.

For further hypotheses, we turn to Durkheim’s opus *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1984). Here he advanced a theory of two types of societies, one based on *mechanical* solidarity, and the other, *organic* solidarity. The former corresponds roughly to Granovetter’s (1973) notion of “strong ties,” the latter to “weak ties.” Strong ties involve individuals in relationships based on homogeneity, propinquity, and proximity. The ratio of common to uniquely-held beliefs is very high, and thus it is relatively easy—“mechanical”—to link individuals to society as a whole, since they share so much. Organic solidarity is a product of the division of labor: specialization leads individuals to recognize their need for others and to develop constructive relationships. This, of course, reflects the same basic theoretical mechanism as Tocqueville’s thinking on political mobilization discussed above. Weak ties can enable communities to be cohesive even in the absence of the intimacy and emotional intensity found in close interpersonal relationships (Granovetter 1973; see also Newton 1997 for a similar discussion with respect to social capital and trust).

Of course, these are ideal types. Social integration in real societies may involve mechanisms of both mechanical and organic solidarity. If elections produce higher levels of mechanical solidarity, then people whose social connections are more traditional, based on, for example, marriage or proximity, should exhibit more change in a trusting direction. In the model below, a latent variable of “social connectedness” tests this hypothesis. In addition, people who perceive a great deal of similarity between themselves and others should be more susceptible to election influences.<sup>8</sup>

The opposing hypothesis is that elections produce the “advanced,” organic variety of solidarity. This approach blunts to some extent the negative appraisal of election by Edelman and others, since it predicts real, substantive interdependence among individual members of the voting

public, based upon individual differences of opinion and ability and not upon mythical similarities—a sort of political division of labor. We operationalize this hypothesis by testing for the effects of civic engagement (membership in voluntary associations of many different types).

## THE MODEL

Before turning to the results, here is a brief review of our four classes of hypotheses, mechanisms through which national elections may stimulate improvements in attitudes reflective of social capital.

- Political mobilization: Elections stimulate participation, and encourage interactions among people who may not ordinarily meet, building trust in others and in government, and instill greater sense of efficacy.
- Campaign involvement: Psychological or behavioral engagement with the campaign, or perhaps the simple act of voting itself, may cause people to feel more connected with politics, increasing both trust and efficacy.
- Qualities of the campaign: The positive (or negative) attributes of the candidates and/or the campaign may induce either greater (or lesser) confidence in the process.
- Campaigns as rituals: The ritualistic aspects of campaigns can lead to increases in abstract social trust by reinforcing mechanical or organic solidarity.

Each of these hypotheses overlaps with the others. For example, mobilization is a means to stimulate greater behavioral engagement, and qualities of the campaign affect the extent to which people are psychologically engaged. If one observes high levels of trust among those who are engaged, one would want to know whether they were also mobilized. The only way to adjudicate among competing hypotheses is to measure and model the change explicitly. The purpose of the remainder of this paper is to engage in such a multivariate analysis, beginning in this section with an explication of the model. Subsequent sections contain a discussion of our findings.

The graphical equivalent of our statistical model appears in Figure 1. Estimating the model involves regressing each of the post-election measures on the equivalent pre-election measure (e.g., post-election trust in people regressed on pre-election trust in people), the contemporaneous measures of the remaining endogenous measures (in this example, post-election

trust in government and post-election efficacy), and pre- and post-election measures of the causes we hypothesize might account for the increase in the dependent analysis.

The coefficients on the lagged dependent variables measure the “stability” of the variable over the pre- to post-election interviews, and the coefficients on other variables in the model measure the extent to which each variable accounts for *change* in the dependent variable (Markus 1979, Finkel 1995).

—Figure 1 here—

There are two advantages of this design: first, and most relevant for purposes of this paper, the structure explicitly permits analysis of change in the variables. We already know that respondents, in general, became more trusting from pre- to post-election; an explicit model of change is the best method to separate the effects of competing explanations. Second, we can better establish causal ordering. Our prior analysis demonstrated with cross-sectional data that individuals who trust others tend to trust government, and vice versa. But it is impossible with the cross-sectional approach to demonstrate that change in social trust *causes* change in trust in government; one of the key requirements for a demonstration of causality is time-ordering of the variables, and only a panel approach, such as that of this paper, can establish the sequence of events for particular individuals.

We focus our remaining discussion on the results from the structural model. (The discussion of the measurement model analysis is relegated to Appendix B.)

## RESULTS: STRUCTURAL EQUATIONS ESTIMATES

What accounts for the increase in trust observed at the outset of this paper? The structural equations estimates provide us with the ammunition to discriminate among the competing explanations. Table 3 displays the structural equations results for each of the post-election measures of trust and efficacy, displayed in the three right-hand columns.

—Table 3 here—

The “stability” coefficients, or the coefficient on the lagged term for each model confirm the impressions from Table 1. There is some stability from pre-election to post-election, but also some change (i.e., the stability coefficients are all well under 1.0), and it is explicating the sources

of this change that is of most interest to us. Before we turn to an evaluation of our hypotheses, however, it is worth noting the coefficients which represent the endogenous relationships among the three dependent variables. In general, these relationships support the web of connections that were sketched in the opening section of this chapter. Efficacy has a modestly strong and positive effect upon social trust: the more that citizens believe that they can influence the actions of government, the more trusting of other people they became over the waves of the survey. Government trust, too, had a positive effect upon social trust. Trust in other people positively affects the change in trust in government: people who are more trusting of others became more trusting of government between the pre- and post-election surveys. Both trust in government and trust in people lead to an increase in the respondents' sense of efficacy, to a statistically and substantively significant degree. Of the statistically significant coefficients, every one is positive: trusters become more trusting, and more efficacious; those who feel efficacious become more trusting. As we argued, efficacy beliefs constitute the core normative apparatus of democracy, an essential component of American's civil religion. However, we do not find evidence that high levels of efficacy affect the electoral change in trust in government—the only nonsignificant coefficient in the endogenous core of the model. Consistent with the notion that elections provide a ritual for renewing common bonds, those who more strongly adhere to the norms of democracy also become more attached to fellow members of the national political community. The reciprocal path is also true. Those who have greater levels of social cohesion become more attached to the beliefs that underlie the political system. Government trust and social trust are in a similar feedback loop.

### EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESES

We offered four different perspectives on the role of elections in generating social capital, and each of the three equations provides us with a further opportunity to assess what causes increasing levels of trust and efficacy, independent of the endogenous relationships among the three. Rather than proceeding through every coefficient in the table, we will provide a summary of how each class of explanations fares, occasionally elaborating on relationships we find particularly interesting.



### Campaign Mobilization.

In general, mobilization does not appear to be particularly important for social capital, with one exception: contact by political parties. The effect of being contacted by a party on social trust is about half the size of trust in government and two-thirds the size of efficacy. The effect is smaller relative to these others, but of non-negligible effect, given that almost 30% of NES respondents reported that they were contacted by a political party during the 1996 campaign. Tocqueville's intuition about the importance of political parties in "forging links" among people appears to have been largely correct, as does Tarrow's (1996) speculation; indeed, membership in political parties is itself a strong indicator of civic engagement (see Appendix B).

### Campaign Involvement.

The second hypothesis to account for the change in trust and efficacy revolved around campaign involvement: when people are psychologically or behaviorally engaged in a campaign, or perhaps even to such a simple degree as by the act of voting itself, they feel more connected with the political process and thus more trusting and efficacious. The evidence in the present analysis provides only mixed and contradictory support for this hypothesis. As anticipated by earlier analyses (e.g., Clark and Acock 1989; Ginsberg and Weisberg 1978), turning out to vote did boost respondents' levels of efficacy. However, it did not increase either form of trust; in fact, the coefficients have the wrong sign. Thus, while voting participation is desirable for many different reasons, it does not appear to be an important mechanism through which elections enhance social capital. Psychological engagement in the campaign also appears to produce mixed effects. It led to greater trust in government and, nonsignificantly, to efficacy, but it reduced social trust. It is impossible to discern from just one election whether this negative sign is due to the mostly negative campaign environment—both television news and the candidates' ads were the among the most negative in recent history (Bartels 1997).

### Qualities of the Campaign

The third hypothesis was that the qualities of the campaign would boost trust and efficacy: the attributes of the candidates and/or the campaign itself may induce greater confidence in the

process. Our tests here are somewhat limited, but the results do provide partial support. Those who could identify multiple positive aspects about both Dole and Clinton did become more trusting in government from pre- to post-election. Cynics may view American elections as competitions among candidates lacking in positive qualities, and one would not expect them to become more trusting of their government. But one might expect those respondents who were able to recognize positive aspects to both of the major candidates for office to see the election as a contest between good alternatives; they should come to be more trusting of their government. Despite general consensus that the campaign was uneventful—Clinton’s projected margin remained remarkably stable over the nine months prior to the election—and despite small but significant percentages of respondents to media polls who truly dislike Clinton, the vast majority of NES respondents found something to like about both major candidates. Over 85% of the respondents found at least one positive trait for both Dole and Clinton, and 17% saw both positive traits in both candidates (“moral” and “gets things done”).

Social trust was not affected by voting for the losing presidential candidates; in fact, losers acquire *more* social trust. However, the signs on trust in government and political efficacy are negative, though not significant, consistent with earlier analyses by others that found that political attitudes can be adversely affected by losing. The margin of victory for the winning congressional candidate is not at all significant, but the sign is in the expected direction; weakly contested races and wider margins for incumbents may decrease efficacy.

### Ritual

The fourth hypothesis is based on the notion that the American ritual of a presidential election provides an opportunity for building solidarity. The pre- to post-changes observed in the two indicators of social solidarity suggest that this did indeed happen, that large numbers of people with initially distrusting orientations exhibited more favorable views after the election. Our multivariate analysis adds some nuances to this election effect: the election rite apparently reinvigorated social cohesion more for some people than others. As we expected, those who are already integrated into the norms and “collective representations” of the American political community, as measured by political knowledge, show the most positive change. And elections

lead to greater social trust for those who are strongly civically engaged. Ironically, our evidence suggests that elections do not lead to increased trust for those people who are well-integrated into their local communities. The sign is negative, although not significant.

The former makes considerable sense, and is eminently consistent with our earlier findings that increased civic engagement begets increased trust. As Putnam has recently argued, and Durkheim and Tocqueville stressed a century earlier, participation in groups reminds people of their interdependence, combats self-absorption, and teaches norms of reciprocity. In the specific context of our analysis of the change in trust over the course of the last month or so of the election, we argue that involvement in intermediate associations immerses participants to greater degree than nonparticipants in the normative order, of which elections, as a means for coming to agreement about differences, play a particular role in the American civil religion.

The negative and weak coefficient for social connectedness speaks to the importance of the difference between rootedness and civic participation. One can easily be solidly rooted in place in a community without developing very strong social connections or civic participation. Consider the southern Italian families of Putnam's classic study (1993, especially p. 114-5; or similar versions reported by Fukuyama [1995]): the majority of citizens experienced little mobility, residing always in the same locations, perhaps with extremely strong family and church ties; there was, however, little evidence of civic association, the difference that Putnam found to be singularly indicative of low levels of social capital. Residence in the community *controlling for one's level of civic participation* may well lead to greater distrust of others. These results, we believe, speak to the need to consider more carefully in theories of social capital production the difference between abstract social trust and more particular forms of trust that may be exhibited in one's personal relationships and local community connections. These connections may well be forms of social capital, but they do not lead to the more abstract forms of social cohesion that are measured by questions about faith in "most people." Instead the "weak ties" of civic engagement rather than the "strong ties" of kinship and locality lead to greater trust of other people.

Our findings suggest that the fear that elections are "merely" rituals, repressing or hoodwinking citizens (see, e.g., Kertzer 1988; Edelman 1964, 1971; Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978) is overstated, since the more informed and more involved segments of American society are

the ones *most* vulnerable to the cohesion-producing properties of elections. Others who fear that the election ritual has become dysfunctional (Bennett 1992) should be somewhat mollified by our results, for we find substantial election effects on civic attitudes, both as a main effect and in the types of people who respond to the normative foundation of the ritual.

By way of final consideration, we note some interesting results among the controls in the model. Several measures of government performance suggest that respondents who see the U.S. as better off, in several dimensions, increase their trust in government. This effect holds for most, but not all of the measures of performance. An improved U.S. foreign policy position, improved economic conditions (standard of living, current economic assessment, personal finances), and a government perceived as being effective in handling the economy all lead to more trusting assessments of government. Those who perceived major changes in federal taxes or in the deficit were unchanged in their trust of government.

## DISCUSSION

This analysis has shown that national elections—at least in the U.S.—can provide the context for increases in various forms of social capital, particularly in those sentiments that are indicative of national solidarity. Elections do this in part by stimulating improvements in political-cultural attitudes—external political efficacy and trust in government. But elections also do this by enacting a religious rite in which attachment to national society is renewed, particularly for those people who have been well-socialized by formal educational institutions and those that are already integrated into society via membership in voluntary associations. These associations are the mechanism through which Durkheim believed solidarity had to be achieved in post-traditional societies in which collective morality exerts a weaker pull on individuals.

How generalizable are our findings to other U.S. elections? As we noted above, the 1996 election was quite typical in terms of several characteristics. But other elections may devolve to even more negativity, or be more tightly contested races, or involve more or less contact with the political parties. There is no particular reason to expect that changes in the levels of the variables would lead to changes in the patterns of effects observed in our analysis of the 1996 election. Nonetheless, examination of the generalizability of our findings in future elections is possible,

provided, of course, that we have similar pre- and post-election measures of social trust, trust in government, and efficacy.

The paramount independent variable for future consideration may be the presence or absence of elections themselves, a phenomenon which can be examined only in a comparative context. We may have unearthed a causal hypothesis for investigation in the extensive comparative democratic-economy debate (e.g., Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Przeworski and Limongi 1993, 1997): do regimes that hold elections, *ceteris paribus*, generate more social capital—and by extension, economic development (per Putnam 1993)—than non-electoral regimes? Our model raises the possibility that it may be better to hold elections than not to, a finding with implications for U.S. foreign policy toward politically developing states and for others making portentous decisions about national politics in the developing world. The simple ritual of elections, given time to take hold, may be a crucial component in the development of the high quality of life represented by high levels of social capital. But perhaps the impact of elections is conditional upon their legitimacy; perhaps electoral rituals are ineffectual for creating social capital in one-party or authoritarian states where the citizens' votes are widely perceived to be largely symbolic. Only further, comparative analysis can tell whether the results reported here are a property of all elections *per se*, or only of decisive, effectual elections in advanced democracies.

Our chapter began with a discussion of the many connections between civic and political attitudes. Our analysis is highly supportive of this general framework: there is a tight reciprocal relationship between social solidarity and political sentiments, confirming the inseparability of civil and political society in modern democratic systems. This intimate connection may ultimately be a source for optimism about the likely trajectory of American civic life. On one hand, regardless of whether social capital is in fact declining (Ladd 1996, Samuelson 1996), Putnam's (1994, 1995a, b) calls for efforts to increase civic engagement are vindicated: increasing civic engagement is clearly linked to increasing social trust, independent of alternative causes. On the other hand, Tarrow's (1996) proposed alternative cause, political mobilization, has its own, independently beneficial effects: we can improve our elections and make them more social-capital enhancing, by, for example, increasing mobilization by the political parties and enticing quality candidates to run;

such efforts may redound to civil society with higher levels of political efficacy, more trust in government, and greater social solidarity.

## NOTES

Paper prepared for presentation at the 1997 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Sheraton Washington, Washington DC, August 30, and the Civic Engagement and American Democracy Conference, Regency Hotel, Portland, ME, Sept. 26-28, 1997. Data used in this paper can be retrieved from the National Election Studies website (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes>). Brehm and Carlson acknowledge the support of the Arts and Sciences Research Council of Duke University. Neither NES nor ASRC bear responsibility for the analysis and interpretations presented.

1. See Appendix A for exact question wording and variable numbers.
2. To simplify the presentation of the crosstabs, the government trust questions were recoded so that volunteered responses of “never” were included with the “only some of the time” responses. For the similarity questions, responses of “not very similar” and “not at all similar” were collapsed into one category, and for the external efficacy items, “strongly agree” and “agree” were collapsed into a single “inefficacious” category, while responses of “strongly disagree” or “disagree” were collapsed into one “efficacious” category. In our multivariate analysis, however, we retain the original categories of these variables.
3. If we examine just pre-election respondents, we find that 38.7% trusted most people, while 61.3% were more cautious (unweighted). This compares to 33.9% and 60.9%, respectively, in the 1996 General Social Survey, another in-person national probability survey, which was conducted in the spring. The GSS codes a “depends” response, which was given by 5.2% of their sample. By comparison, in the 1992 NES post-election interview, almost 45% gave the trusting response. In the 1991 GSS, trusters were 40.5% of the sample, and in the 1993 GSS, 37.3%. In fact, it was these higher rates of trust recorded in the NES data, in comparison to the GSS data, that inspired the idea that elections might have social-capital enhancing effects.

4. One possible spurious cause is the NES itself, of course: perhaps respondents become more trusting simply as a result of a pleasant experience with the survey interviewer. As a test for this reactivity effect, we re-analyzed our model with pre-election interviewer's assessments of the respondent's level of interest and cooperativeness. If the respondents were inclined to be primed by the pre-election survey to think more positively of others, we would expect greater changes among those who were more interested and cooperative with the pre-election interview. The results were generally disconfirming of such a reactivity effect. Apparent interest was positively related only to change in social trust and unrelated otherwise. Post-election cooperation was *negatively* related only to change in social trust. Furthermore, none of the substantive coefficients were affected by the inclusion of the interviewer ratings. See Table 3, "Controls."
5. In fact, party mobilization was up considerably in 1996 (29.2% unweighted) over 1992 (20.1%), and is equal to the highest level of party contact recorded in the NES time series; in 1972, 29% also reported being contacted. See Table 2.
6. Clark and Acock (1989; see also Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978) attempt to distinguish between what they call the "pure participation" and "outcome-contingent" effects on political efficacy. Pure participation refers to the effects of participating *per se* on support for the political system. The argument is that people who participate (even if they do not get the outcome they desire) need to rationalize such behavior in terms of normative beliefs about citizen influence. On the other hand, people who participate *and* get what they want adjust their efficacy beliefs based on the reality of successfully achieving an outcome. In our model, we include both of these effects. Our conclusions, however, are somewhat at odds with theirs, but are very consistent with Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978.
7. Our perspective on rituals departs somewhat from a Durkheimian tradition that emphasizes the physical gathering of a group of people and their common interaction which culminates in a shared emotional feeling. Modern elections involve more of an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) than a face-to-face community. The mass media, however, may allow people to imagine their communion even though they are not



assembled in the same location, and these psychological connections may allow people to participate in the ritual vicariously rather than directly (Dayan and Katz 1992). It may be, of course, that the resulting solidarity is less intense and more abstract than the bonding that occurs in real places such as sports stadiums and church sanctuaries, even airplanes. But the citizen identity enacted through either real or vicarious participation is more extensive than these localized identities, and so the aggregate increase in solidarity is potentially great.

8. The fact that the election did not result in any net increase in perceived similarity (Table 1c) suggests that its solidarity-enhancing effect did not operate through this mechanism. Nevertheless, it may still be the case that those who see similarities between themselves and others may show greater change in a trusting direction than those who do not.

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**Table 1** Pre- and Post-Election Levels of Social Trust, Fairness, Perceived Similarity, External Efficacy and Government Trust

**1a. Social Trust**

Pre ► ▼ Post	<i>Trusting</i>	<i>Cautious</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Trusting</i>	523 86.9%	243 26.8%	766 50.8%
<i>Cautious</i>	79 13.1	663 73.2	742 49.2
<i>Totals</i>	602 39.9	906 60.1	1508 100

*Tau-b = .59 Pearson's r = .59*

**1b. Fairness**

Pre ► ▼ Post	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Take Advantage</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Fair</i>	787 84.9%	173 30.4%	960 64.2%
<i>Take Advantage</i>	140 15.1	396 69.6	536 35.8
<i>Totals</i>	927 62.0	569 38.0	1496 100

*Tau-b = .55 Pearson's r = .55*

**1c. Perceived Similarity**

Pre ► ▼ Post	<i>Very</i>	<i>Some-what</i>	<i>Not</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Very Similar</i>	70 37.0%	100 9.7%	21 7.3%	191 12.7%
<i>Somewhat Similar</i>	99 52.4	800 77.9	137 47.6	1036 68.9
<i>Not Similar</i>	20 10.6	127 12.4	130 45.1	277 18.4
<i>Totals</i>	189 12.6	1027 68.3	288 19.1	1504 100

*Tau-b = .31 Pearson's r = .33*

**1d. External Efficacy**

Pre ► ▼ Post	<i>Efficacious</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Ineffi-cacious</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Efficacious</i>	123 71.6%	47 35.1%	221 27.7%	691 45.3%
<i>Neutral</i>	45 7.6	29 21.6	75 9.4	149 9.8
<i>Inefficacious</i>	123 20.8	58 43.3	503 63.0	684 44.0
<i>Totals</i>	591 38.8	134 8.8	799 52.4	1524 100

*Tau-b = .40 Pearson's r = .43*

**1e. Government Trust**

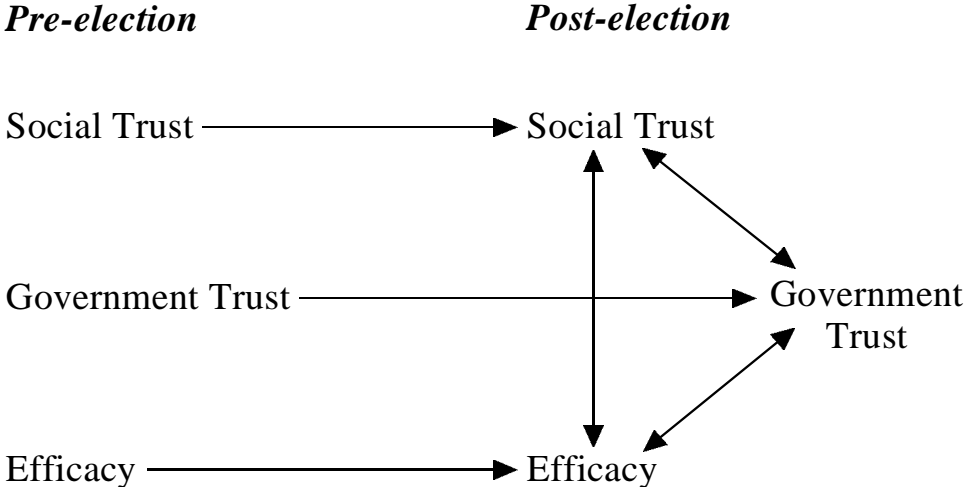
Pre ► ▼ Post	<i>Always</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>Only Some</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Always</i>	9 23.1%	14 3.5%	11 1.0%	34 2.2%
<i>Most</i>	20 51.3	243 60.6	194 18.0	457 30.1
<i>Only Some</i>	10 25.6	144 35.9	872 81.0	1026 67.6
<i>Totals</i>	39 2.6	401 26.4	1077 71.0	1517 100

*Tau-b = .44 Pearson's r = .44*

**Table 2** Comparison of 1996 with previous elections

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1980</i>
Interest in Campaign	Very much interested	31.9%	38.9%	27.9%	28.4%	29.8%
	Somewhat interested	52.2%	43.8%	47.2%	46.8%	44.2%
	Not very interested	15.9%	17.3%	25.0%	24.8%	26.0%
Campaign TV Consumption	Viewed one or more programs	75.7%	88.9%	n/a	86.1%	85.9%
Turnout	R Reported voting	68.6%	75.4%	69.7%	73.6%	71.4%
Did a party contact R?	Yes	29.2%	20.1%	23.6%	23.7%	24.4%
Positive Trait Sum	Saw two positive traits in both major candidates	17.7%	12.6%			
	Saw at least one positive trait in both major candidates	84.8%	60.1%			
Political Knowledge	Mean number of correct ID's	1.96	1.51			

**Figure 1** Model of Structural Equation Core Variables



**Table 3** Structural Equation Estimates for Models of Change  
in Trust and Efficacy, 1996 National Election Studies

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Social Trust (Post)</i>	<i>Government Trust (Post)</i>	<i>Efficacy (Post)</i>
<b>Lagged Variables (Stability Coefficients)</b>			
Social Trust (Pre)	0.54** (0.03)		
Government Trust (Pre)		0.34** (0.03)	
Efficacy (Pre)			0.42** (0.03)
<b>Endogenous Core</b>			
Social Trust (Post)		0.14* (0.06)	0.19** (0.05)
Government Trust (Post)	0.10* (0.06)		0.13** (0.06)
Efficacy (Post)	0.07* (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)	
<b>Campaign Mobilization</b>			
Did a party contact R?	0.05** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
Non-party contact?	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Talk about registration or turnout?	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
<b>Campaign Involvement</b>			
Behavioral Engagement	-0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
Psychological Engagement	-0.06** (0.03)	0.07* (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)
Did R vote?	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.08** (0.04)
<b>Qualities of the Campaign</b>			
Did R vote for Dole?	0.07** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)
Positive Trait Sum		0.11** (0.03)	
Congressional Vote Margin			0.02 (0.03)

<b>Ritual</b>			
Civic Engagement	0.09** (0.04)		
Social Connectedness	-0.02 (0.03)		
Similarity to Others	0.04** (0.02)		
Political Knowledge	0.13** (0.03)	-0.11** (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)
<b>Controls</b>			
Is U.S stronger?		0.07** (0.03)	
Will Standard of Living Improve?		0.05* (0.03)	
Does Government Policy Improve Economy?		0.04 (0.03)	
Clinton Increase Deficit?		0.01 (0.03)	
Clinton Increase Taxes?		0.00 (0.03)	
Economic Assessment		0.07* (0.03)	
Personal Finances		0.05 (0.03)	
Family Income (000's)			0.06* (0.03)
Days after Election	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Cooperativeness (Pre-Election)	-0.06** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Interest in Interview (Pre-Election)	0.12** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Partisanship	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)

Cell entries are unstandardized coefficients from a structural equation model; latent variables were generated by a separate confirmatory factor analysis (see Appendix B). Standard errors appear in parentheses below coefficients. Asterisks mark coefficients where  $p < .05$  in a one-tailed test (\*) or a two tailed test (\*\*).

## Appendix A: Question Wording and Coding

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</i>	<i>Coding</i>
<b>Interpersonal Trust (Pre- and Post-Election)</b>		
Can people be trusted?	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (PRE v960567; POST v961258)	0,1; 1=Can be trusted
Are people fair?	Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance or would they try to be fair? (PRE v960569; POST v961259)	0,1; 1=Fair
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	<i>All group variables:</i> There are many types of organizations, groups, and charities that people might be involved with. We're interested in what kinds of groups you might be involved with. I'm going to read you a list of different types of organizations. For each type, could you tell me the name or names of the organizations you are involved with?	0,1; 1=involvement in one or more groups of this type
Nonpartisan Civic Organizations	Nonpartisan civic organizations interested in the political life of the community or nation --such as the League of Women's [sic] Voters or a better government association? (POST v961389)	
Labor Unions	Our first type of group is labor unions. (Are you involved with any labor unions?) Which ones? (POST v961344)	
Professional Associations	How about other organizations associated with your work such as a business or professional association or a farm organization? (POST v961349)	
Veterans' Organizations	Veterans organizations such as the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars? (POST v961354)	
Churches and Synagogues	Are you a member of a local church, parish or synagogue? (POST v961359)	
Other Religious Organizations	How about other organizations affiliated with your religion besides that, such as the Knights of Columbus or B'nai B'rith, or a bible study group? (POST v961364)	
Elderly Groups	Organizations for the elderly or senior citizens? (POST v961369)	

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</i>	<i>Coding</i>
Ethnic Associations	Organizations representing your own particular nationality or ethnic group such as the Polish-American Congress, the Mexican-American Legal Defense, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People? (POST v961374)	
Women's Groups	Organizations mainly interested in issues promoting the rights or the welfare of women -- an organization such as the National Organization for women, or the Eagle Forum, or the American Association of University Women? (POST v961379)	
Political Issue Groups	Organizations active on any particular political issues such as the environment or abortion (on either side), or gun control (on either side) or consumer's rights, or the rights of taxpayers or any other issues? (POST v961384)	
Ideological Organizations	Organizations that support general liberal or conservative causes such as Americans for Democratic Action or the Conservative Caucus? (POST v961394)	
Political Parties	Organizations active in supporting candidates for elections such as a political party organization? (POST v961399)	
Youth and Sports Groups	Groups in which children might participate, such as Girl Scouts, 4-H, youth sports leagues such as soccer or Little League? (POST v961404)	
Literary and Art Groups	Literary, art, discussion or study groups? (POST v961409)	
Hobby and Sports Clubs	Hobby clubs, sports or country clubs, bowling leagues, or other groups for leisure time activities? (POST v961414)	
Neighborhood Associations	Associations related to where you live --neighborhood or community associations, homeowners' or condominium associations, or block clubs? (POST v961419)	
Fraternal Organizations	Service or fraternal organizations such as the Lions or Kiwanis or a local women's club or a college fraternity or sorority? (POST v961424)	
Charitable Organizations	Organizations that provide services in such fields as health or service to the needy-- for instance, a hospital, a cancer or heart drive, or a group like the Salvation Army that works for the poor? (POST v961429)	



<i>Variable</i>	<i>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</i>	<i>Coding</i>
Educational Institutions	Educational institutions-- local schools, your own school or college, organizations associated with education such as school alumni associations or school service organizations such as the PTA? (POST v961434)	
Cultural Organizations	Organizations that are active in providing cultural services to the public --for example, museums, symphonies, or public radio or television? (POST v961439)	
Self-help Groups	Support or self-help groups such as AA or Gamblers' Anonymous? (POST v961444)	
Any other groups	Any other organizations? (POST v961449)	
<b>Social Connectedness</b>		
Talk with neighbors regularly?	Do you have any neighbors that you know and talk to regularly? (POST v961260)	0,1; 1=Yes
Log (Years in Residence)	How long have you lived in your present (city/town/township/county)? (PRE v960712)	log of NES values from 1/52 [for 0] to 90; min -3.99, max 4.50
Own home?	(Do you/ Does your family) own your home, pay rent, or what? (PRE v960714)	0,1; 1=Own house
Married?	Are you married now and living with your (husband/wife)--or are you widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never married? (PRE v960606)	0,1; 1=Married now
Church Attendance	IF R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES:Do you go to religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never? (PRE v960578)	0 to 1 by .25; 1=every week
<b>Behavioral Engagement</b>		
Displayed a campaign button, sticker or sign?	Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house? (POST v961166)	0,1; 1=Yes
Attended political meeting	Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate? (POST v961167)	0,1; 1=Yes
Worked for party	Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates? (POST v961168)	0,1; 1=Yes

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</b>	<b>Coding</b>
Gave money to candidate	During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office? (POST v961169)	0,1; 1=Yes
Gave money to party	Did you give money to a political party during this election year? (POST v961171)	0,1; 1=Yes
Gave money to group	Did you give any money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates? (POST v961173)	0,1; 1=Yes
<b>Psychological Engagement</b>		
Interest in Campaign	Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the political campaigns this year? (POST v961001)	0..5,1; 1=Very much interested
Campaign TV Consumption	IF R WATCHED PROGRAMS ABOUT THE CAMPAIGNS ON TV: Would you say you watched a good many, several, or just one or two? (POST v961002, v961003)	0 to 1 by .33; 1=A good many (0 is defined by "No" answer to v961002)
Attention to Campaign News	In general, how much attention did you pay to news about the campaign for President -- a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or none? (POST v961337)	0 to 1 by .25; 1=A great deal
Attention to Congressional Campaign	In general, how much attention did you pay to news about the campaigns for election to Congress -- that is, the House of Representatives in Washington -- a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or none? (POST v961338)	0 to 1 by .25; 1=A great deal
<b>Endogenous Variables</b>		
Government Trust (Pre)	People have different ideas about the government in Washington. These ideas don't refer to Democrats or Republicans in particular, but just to the GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL. We want to see how you feel about these ideas. For example: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right-- JUST ABOUT ALWAYS, MOST OF THE TIME, or ONLY SOME OF THE TIME? (PRE v960566)	0 to 1 by .33; 1=Just about always
Government Trust (Post)	How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right--just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time? (POST v961251)	0 to 1 by .33; 1=Just about always

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</b>	<b>Coding</b>
Efficacy (Pre)	Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." (PRE v960568)	0-1 by .25; 1=disagree strongly
Efficacy (Post)	People like me don't have any say about what the government does. (POST v961245)	0-1 by .25; 1=disagree strongly
<b>Campaign Mobilization</b>		
Did party contact R?	As you know, the political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year? (POST v961162)	0,1; 1=Yes
Non-party contact?	Other than someone from the two major parties, did anyone (else) call you up or come around and talk to you about supporting specific candidates in this last election? (POST v961164)	0,1; 1=Yes
Talk about registration or turnout?	During the campaign this year, did anyone talk to you about registering to vote or getting out to vote? (POST v961174)	0,1; 1=Yes
<b>Campaign Involvement</b>		
Did R vote?	In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you--did you vote in the elections this November? (POST v961074)	0,1; 1=Yes, voted
<b>Qualities of the Campaign</b>		
Did R vote for Dole?	IF R VOTED FOR CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT: Who did you vote for? (POST v961082)	0,1; 1=vote for Dole
Positive Trait Sum	Think about Bill Clinton [Bob Dole]. In your opinion, does the phrase "(he [is])....[moral/gets things done]" describe Bill Clinton extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all? (POST v961112, 14, 16, 18)	0-4; 4=positive evaluations of both candidates on both traits
Congressional Vote Margin	Margin of victory of winning congressional candidate over nearest opponent, from FEC data (N/A)	min -25, max 100
<b>Ritual</b>		
Similarity to Others	In terms of general attitudes and beliefs, how similar would you say other people are to you--VERY SIMILAR, SOMEWHAT SIMILAR, NOT VERY SIMILAR, or NOT AT ALL SIMILAR? (PRE v960570)	-.5 to 1; 1=Very similar

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</i>	<i>Coding</i>
Political Knowledge	Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like. The first name is Al Gore [Rehnquist/Yeltsin/Gingrich]. What job or political office does he now hold? (POST v961189-92)	0-4; 4=correct identification of all four figures.
<b>Controls</b>		
Is U.S stronger?	During the past year, would you say that the United States' position in the world has grown WEAKER, STAYED ABOUT THE SAME, or has it grown STRONGER? (PRE v960409)	-1 to 1 by 1; 1=Stronger
Will Standard of Living Improve?	Do you think that twenty years from now, the standard of living for the people who are just children now will be BETTER, ABOUT THE SAME, or WORSE than it is today? (PRE v960389)	-1 to 1 by 1; 1=Better
Gov't Policy Improve Economy?	Over the past year would you say that the economic policies of the federal government have made the nation's economy BETTER, WORSE, or HAVEN'T THEY MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE either way? [If better/worse, Would you say MUCH better or SOMEWHAT better?] (PRE v960391)	-1 to 1 by .5; 1=increased a lot
Clinton Increase Deficit?	[Would you say that the size of the yearly budget deficit INCREASED, DECREASED, or STAYED ABOUT THE SAME during Clinton's time as President?] If increase/ decrease: Would you say it increased A LOT or A LITTLE? (PRE [v960392] v960393)	-1 to 1 by .5; 1=Increased a lot
Clinton Increase Taxes?	[Would you say that the federal income tax paid by the average working person has INCREASED, DECREASED, or STAYED ABOUT THE SAME during Clinton's time as President?] If increase/ decrease: Would you say it increased A LOT or A LITTLE? (PRE [v960394] v960395)	-1 to 1 by .5; 1=Increased a lot
Economic Assessment	What do you think about the state of the economy these days in the United States? Would you say that the state of the economy is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad? (POST v961476)	-1 to 1 by .5; 1=Very good
Personal Finances	What do you think of your personal financial situation these days? Would you say that your personal financial situation is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad? (POST v961243)	-1 to 1 by .5; 1=Very good

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Question Wording (When Asked, NES Variable No.)</i>	<i>Coding</i>
Family Income (000's)	Please look at page 21 of the booklet and tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income of all members of your family living here in 1995 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. (PRE v960701)	<i>low end of R's income bracket in 000's</i>
Days after Election	This variable is based on the date of interview. It counts the number of days after the election day (November 5, 1996). (POST v960904)	<i>1 to 58</i>
Cooperativeness (Pre-Election)	[Completed by interviewer] R's cooperation was: Very good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very poor. [NOTE: no R's were rated "Very Poor"] (PRE v960069)	<i>.25 to 1; 1=Very good</i>
Interest in Interview (Pre-Election)	[Completed by interviewer] Overall, how great was R's interest in the interview? Very high, Above average, Average, Below average, Very low. (PRE 960073)	<i>0 to 1; 1=Very high</i>
Partisanship	Combined 7-point partisanship scale recoded from -1 to 1, then folded at 0 so strong Democrat and strong Republican both equal 1 (PRE [v960417-19] v960420)	<i>0 to 1 by .33; 1=strong partisan</i>

## Appendix B: The Measurement Model

The measurement model results, a confirmatory factor analysis, appear in Table B1. We assume that each of the factors is correlated, but that none of the measurement errors are correlated. We further assume that the variance of each latent variable is a free parameter. The fit for the confirmatory factor model is good, with a Goodness of Fit Index of .88 and an RMSEA of .05.

—Table B1 here—

The first latent variables of interest are the measures for social trust pre- and post-election. Each is indicated by two variables, with the same question wording in each wave.

- Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
- Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance or would they try to be fair?

Both indicators are simple yes/no dichotomies. The first loading on each factor is, by convention, fixed to 1. The second, freed, loading (for “fair”) is approximately 1, nearly on par with the scale factor, which means that the two indicators are tracking the same underlying factor to about the same extent. Both of the loadings are statistically significant beyond the  $p < .05$  level.

The next latent measure of some interest is that for civic engagement. In our previous analyses, we examined whether individual membership in a list of civic organizations tracked the same latent variable (Brehm and Rahn 1997, Berger and Brehm 1997). The pattern of factor loadings is strikingly similar across the three papers. We fix the scale for this factor with membership in civic associations. Each indicator is coded 0 for no memberships, and 1 for any membership. Although the 1997 NES ascertained the number of multiple memberships, as per analysis by Baumgartner and Walker (1988), in order to render the present analysis parallel with our previous work, we collapse multiple memberships into a single code category. There is a theoretical reason in addition to the purpose of comparability: our concept of civic engagement should reflect the multiplicity of types of groups that individuals belong to, rather than the total number of groups. In other words, we regard activity in the PTA, a neighborhood watch, and coaching soccer as three indicators of civic involvement, whereas activity in soccer, softball, and

bowling (in leagues, of course), is one indicator of civic involvement. Moreover, loadings for the variable including the number of groups are very similar to those used here.

The high loadings are clearly associated with community (e.g., church and other religious organizations, sports groups, neighborhood associations, education groups) and purposive politics (e.g., professional associations, women's groups, political parties and political issue groups). The weakest loadings are for membership in labor unions, ideological groups, and self-help groups. The weak loading for unions may be accounted for because membership in a union is almost always compulsory within certain shops, and hence does not represent the extent to which one voluntarily engages in one's community. The poor loading for ideological groups may be accounted for by the explicitly divisive posture adopted by many of these groups.

The next latent measure of interest is that for social connectedness. Here, our purpose is to identify the extent to which an individual is well-established within his or her local community. We fix the scale with a measure of whether the respondent talks with his or her neighbors regularly, coded as a dichotomy. Predictably, measures of whether a respondent owns his or her home, is married, and attends church regularly all scale close to 1, again suggesting a strong shared connection to the underlying factor. The number of years the respondent has resided in the community also loads in the predicted direction, and to a statistically significant degree, although the magnitude is not strong, so length of residence perhaps should not be used as a measure of connectedness (as in, e.g., Teixeira 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). (We employ the natural log of the number of years of residence, in order to treat the small differences between relatively short stays in a community as intrinsically equivalent to large differences between relatively long stays in the community. At least one nonagenarian resided in the same community for ninety years.)

We turn next to our construction of a latent measure for the extent to which a respondent is behaviorally engaged with politics. We have six dichotomous measures of political participation: whether the respondent wore a campaign button; attended a political meeting; worked for a party; and gave money to a candidate, party or group. Note that each of these activities reflect activity on the part of the respondent, as opposed to the measures of political stimulation by others (contact by parties, by non-parties, and by people promoting voter

registration). Our aim is to measure the now familiar concept of a respondent's involvement in the campaign (e.g., Verba and Nie 1972, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), as distinct from general participation in civic life (measured by the civic engagement factor) or stimulation by the campaign. With the exception of giving money to groups, the remaining four freed loadings are all close to 1, again signifying strong connection to the concept. Even the loading for giving money to groups is reasonably strong, although small.

Our final latent measure is for the extent to which a respondent is psychologically engaged with the campaign (e.g., Milbrath and Goel 1977). The factor represents the amount of cognitive investment the respondent is willing to devote to politics. We fix the scale with the traditional question of whether the respondent is interested in the campaign, coded from 0 (not at all interested) through 1 (very interested). Three indicators are freed: whether the respondent watched news about the campaign on TV, how much attention to news about the presidential campaign, and how much attention to news about the congressional campaign. All three freed loadings are large and close to 1, again confirming the strength of the common factor.



**Table B1** Scales for Trust and Engagement, 1996 National Election Studies

<i>Latent Variable</i> / Indicators	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Latent Variable</i> / Indicators	<i>Loading</i>
<b><i>Interpersonal Trust (Pre-Election)</i></b>		<b><i>Civic Engagement</i></b>	
Can people be trusted?	1.00	Nonpartisan Civic Organizations	1.00
Are people fair?	1.14 (0.14)	Labor Unions	0.62 (0.05)
<b><i>Interpersonal Trust (Post-Election)</i></b>		Professional Associations	1.68 (0.08)
Can people be trusted?	1.00	Veterans' Organizations	0.64 (0.05)
Are people fair?	1.11 (0.07)	Churches and Synagogues	1.33 (0.07)
<b><i>Social Connectedness</i></b>		Other Religious Organizations	1.35 (0.07)
Talk with neighbors regularly?	1.00	Elderly Groups	0.96 (0.06)
Log(Years in Residence)	1.05 (0.06)	Ethnic Associations	0.93 (0.06)
Own home?	2.57 (0.16)	Women's Groups	1.15 (0.06)
Married?	1.61 (0.08)	Political Issue Groups	1.64 (0.08)
Church Attendance	1.11 (0.05)	Ideological Groups	0.07 (0.04)
<b><i>Behavioral Engagement</i></b>		Political Parties	1.88 (0.09)
Displayed a campaign button, sticker or sign?	1.00	Youth and Sports Groups	1.44 (0.07)
Attended political meeting	1.19 (0.06)	Literary and Art Groups	0.95 (0.06)
Worked for party	1.09 (0.06)	Hobby and Sports Clubs	1.27 (0.07)
Gave money to candidate	1.26 (0.07)	Neighborhood Associations	1.74 (0.09)
Gave money to party	0.95 (0.06)	Fraternal Organizations	1.12 (0.06)
Gave money to group	0.54 (0.05)	Charitable Organizations	1.65 (0.08)
<b><i>Psychological Engagement</i></b>		Educational Institutions	1.97 (0.10)
Interest in Campaign	1.00	Cultural Organizations	2.09 (0.10)
Campaign TV Consumption	0.74 (0.05)	Self-help Groups	0.55 (0.05)
Attention to Campaign News	1.20 (0.07)	Any other groups	0.92 (0.06)
Attention to Congressional Campaign	0.99 (0.06)		

Cell entries are factor loadings from a confirmatory factor analysis. All factor loadings are statistically very significant at  $p < .001$  except Ideological Groups, where  $p < .10$ .

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