CHAPTER

6

Political Participation

In this chapter, we look at the various ways in which individuals and groups participate in the processes of governance. We know from decades of research that there is a great deal of variation in the ways and degrees to which individuals participate in political processes. The chapter opens with a discussion of citizenship as a social role of sorts in a system of politics. We have found there are many acts associated with citizenship as well as acts associated with exclusion from rights, privileges, or expectations associated with citizenship. Many of these role behaviors have been organized into quite useful typologies of political participation. The chapter then looks at these types of political participation in detail, including current research. This is followed by a discussion of a contemporary debate around what some call the decline of civic engagement in the United States, and the role of what sociologists call "social capital" in this process. Finally, the chapter ends by looking at two recent studies that conclude political participation is changing as a result of broad social forces. This chapter prepares us to move into more detailed chapters that follow regarding voting and electoral processes, the extensive research on political and social movements, and terrorism as political violence.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS POWER

Political participation is important to the field of political sociology because it addresses fundamental characteristics of politics, the state, and organization of power in society. Who participates in the political decision making of the community? Is this participation even and equal for all members of the social group; is it divided, or concentrated in the hands of a few? Do some

participate more than others? What are the boundaries of legitimate participation encouraged or fostered by the institution of politics and its associated structures? Are certain forms of participation considered illegitimate, beyond the role the nation conceptualizes for citizens? These are a few of the many questions that political sociologists address in the study of political participation. Much of the work begins with the study of citizenship.

The concept of citizenship is both a political and a social artifact (Kivisto and Faist 2007; van Steenbergen 1994). It is a creation of the state and at the same time provides structure to individual roles in society; it takes on different forms of action, expression, symbolism, and social organization. Thus, the concept of citizenship is important to political sociology. *Citizenship* refers to the participation in or membership in a community. Marx noted that citizenship is the creation of the modern state, a superstructure that emerges from the dynamics of a class-based society. Citizenship as a political creation obscures the class inequalities created in the capitalist system:

> The state in its own way abolishes distinctions based on birth, rank, education and occupation when it declares birth, rank, education and occupation to be non-political distinctions, when it proclaims that every member of the people is an equal participant in popular sovereignty regardless of these distinctions, when it treats all those elements which go to make up the actual life of the people from the standpoint of the state. (Marx 1992[1843]: 219)

Parsons approached the concept by emphasizing the function of citizenship in maintaining societies. Citizenship is recognition of membership in a community. Thus, with membership in the larger social group of citizens and civil society we identify certain roles and norms for behavior. Citizenship is essential for social order according to the functionalist model. Legitimacy to rule and assumptions of authority are reinforced through participatory rulemaking. From the elite power perspective, we are interested in understanding whether this notion of "membership in a political community" is inclusive or exclusive. What are the bases for citizenship? What power does citizenship offer to those who hold membership? Is citizenship the basis for distributing power among all members of the community? How is membership reproduced?

One of the first studies of citizenship was the historical analysis developed by T. H. Marshall (1950). By treating citizenship as rights-based and created through the rules and procedures developed formally by the state, Marshall saw rights as moving through a number of stages since the great revolutions of the 1700s. His approach to understanding citizenship was designed to explain how democracy and capitalism could work together as it evolved in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Marshall suggested a paradox. Adam Smith argued that naked power in society could be checked by the presence of a political system alongside a system of commerce. A minimalist state could act as a watchman to preserve economic growth. Similarly, Immanuel Kant viewed the state as an instrument of security, preserving social peace. Liberal governments in consort with trade and the involvement of people normally considered outside the process of governance would create a balance between democratic institutions and capitalism. But T. H. Marshall's mid-century study of this relationship offered a different conclusion, especially after examining the historical evidence of the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, and World Wars I and II. Marshall argued that capitalism and democracy were incompatible for two reasons. First, capitalism required a "set of practices" we associate with competition and define primarily in economic terms, whereas democracy emphasized equality, cooperation, and free access. Second, capitalism survives only in an environment where those who command the resources are deemed worthy, or perhaps competent, whereas democracy assumes an equal distribution of

power among members of the community or society. This creates an inherent tension in society, which seeks to extend citizenship and maintain the wealth of commerce.

According to Marshall, rights associated with modern citizenship could only be understood in the context of what we know as the modern welfare state. He concluded that social actions the civil sphere created in tandem with the welfare state revolved around three axes of tension where social conflict would have to be balanced or transformed to create some semblance of social order. These axes of citizenship were known as the civil, political, and social axes. In the civil axis, rights would be developed to assure necessary or fundamental individual freedoms. As these first appeared in the eighteenth century, civil citizenship took the form of laws where society would put principles of acceptable boundaries of citizenship into constitutional form. Political citizenship focused on extensions of participation and sharing of political power with the masses. Here a relationship was created between citizen and parliament, with tensions created in direction of rule or allocation of resources always in check by those voting. Social citizenship, according to Marshall, was about defining a standard of life and the social heritage of one's community or society. Broad-based social relationships were built between the individual and services offered by the state (education, welfare, etc.).

Emphases on one dimension over another are associated with different eras of history, as well as different social institutions. The individual is thus placed in a context of history and social structure. Thus, Marshall suggested that citizenship evolved and changed as a result of social conflict and struggle. Class struggles of the feudal period resulted in changes in the extension of rights and legal protections (e.g., Magna Carta, common law in England). The constitutional changes of previous periods in history were altered yet again in the 1800s as economic inequality prompted demands for participation in democratic processes traditionally run by the ruling class (e.g., enfranchisement of working-class populations in England and the United States). According to Marshall, once political rights were achieved, class struggle manifested itself in the conflict over demands for certain standards of living, and this reflects the real class war. Although social rights have reduced some inequalities, the conflict continues.

Bryan Turner's work (1993) is a good example of how Marshall's theory of citizenship was extended. Turner suggests that modern citizenship especially be thought of as "that set of practices (juridical, political, economic, and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which has consequences for the flow of resources to persons or social groups" (2). He treats citizenship as more than just the formal extension of rights by the state. The political sociology of citizenship in this regard emphasizes a number of advances beyond Marshall. First, Turner highlights social practices connected to group (social) membership. Historically, one of the essential practices of citizenship has been to participate in the decision making of the community. This is an important tenet of democratic systems of rule as well. Under authoritarian forms of rule, the practices of citizenship are restricted to obedience to the commands of those in power. Second, Turner suggests that social practices unfold in a number of social arenas including those related to the laws of society, and the political and economic organizations and rules, as well as the normative and cultural spheres of social life. Thus, to conceptualize citizenship fully we must look for social practices other than just the political. Citizenship can be enacted in a number of social contexts. Third, Turner highlights how social practices influence the distribution of power in society. In his view, power is understood in a more traditional model of resource allocation and scarcity of resources in society. Nonetheless, the enactment of the social role of citizen can change the flow of resources in the social group.

In many ways, current political sociologies of citizenship are shaped by tensions between the traditional pluralist model of politics, and the class-elite models that argue citizenship is not equal by any means. Citizenship and subsequent political participation was tied to Enlightenment philosophy that moved societies from monarchies to democracies. The essential argument was

Detroit, Michigan, voters cast ballots in a presidential election

Credit: Jim West/Alamy Images

this: Human beings could rule themselves based on reason, knowledge, and understanding of the social condition. In the Age of Revolution, the notion of rule through divine right was transformed. We associate the emergence of citizenship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the philosophy of liberalism and the changing nature of the relationship between individual and the state. As Hall and Ikenberry (1985) note in their study of citizenship, liberalism, and the state, "the individual is held to be the seat of moral worth" (5).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Each framework in political sociology approaches the study of political participation with different assumptions and perspectives. Nonetheless each examines the classic assumptions about democracy, the role of participation by the masses, as well as the role of political action in the public sphere in different ways. This work and its many directions over the past one hundred years offers a detailed political sociology of political participation in its many forms, as we shall see.

Pluralist

The pluralist framework places a heavy emphasis on political participation, as it argues that participation by the masses and competition among interest groups are the essence of democratic society. The plurality of power in society in fact includes individual citizens influencing the allocation of societal resources in a number of different ways. The pluralist view of political participation links it closely to the creation of the state, and thus sees participation by individuals and groups as critical to its survival. Participation is one way to understand how societies deal with the pressures of modernization. Participation is also a way to bring about consensus and integration. Elections are taken as the final arbiter of political decisions and conflicts over values. "Majority rule" is never challenged to the point where the society crumbles.

In their outline of the pluralist approach to understanding political participation, Alford and Friedland (1985) identified forms of citizen action at different levels of social organization. For example, widespread changes at the societal level typically involve organization of citizens into sociopolitical movements. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is a good example of a watershed movement resulting in changes in the distribution of power at many levels of state action. Numerous policies and practices would eventually change as a result of this movement's concentrated efforts to reform voting rights and employment practices, and raise societal concern about racial, gendered, and age-based prejudice in society.

At another level of social organization, political parties structure participation in governance by organizing citizens into party activities and party voting. Parties may sometimes attempt to pull in social movements into their political work, as the Democrats did with the Civil Rights Movement. In the United States, participation in the work of a political party is a mechanism for exercising influence over policy. Interest-group work and lobbying are examples of the kinds of efforts that formalized organizations use to create other channels of participation. Interest groups typically activate citizens over single-policy issues. For example, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) keeps its members informed of federal and state legislation changing policies on Social Security (SS), Medicare, or health care reform. The AARP works with both political parties in the United States to create favorable policy outcomes for persons who approach retirement as defined by law, or to support programs designed to help aging segments of the population. Members are typically encouraged to send letters or contact their representatives in Congress when policies concerning this segment of the population become a concern.

One of the more interesting statements of liberalism, citizenship, and political participation in the modern era was that offered by Theodore Lowi (1969). He argued that liberalism is a product of capitalism, but through history this has evolved into new forms of citizenship. Traditional capitalism was the seedbed of American civic ideas about political participation: "The United States is a child of the Industrial Revolution. Its godfather is capitalism and its guardian Providence, otherwise known as the 'invisible hand' " (3). It created a political culture or liberal philosophy that civic life in America was a function of beliefs in individualism, rationality, and nationalism. Thus, early American liberalism accentuated the basic tenets of capitalism. These ideas went hand in hand in defining citizenship.

Lowi argues that in the nineteenth century, the United States was characterized by pure capitalism. In the early twentieth century, four factors changed the public's ideological orientations toward capitalism:

1. increased division of labor with a multiplication of roles;
2. specialization in the units of production and distribution systems;
3. multiplication of the units of social control; and
4. spatial differentiation, urbanization, and population shifts.

In the late nineteenth century and after the Industrial Revolution, the progressive and populist reforms placed a greater emphasis on state protection of interests. Emphasis moved away from the capitalist philosophies of self-regulation and the invisible hand, and shifted to the state that defined citizenship in a manner that would foster social control.

The post-industrial period marks the entrance of activist government, which is found in the modern liberal state. Lowi describes what emerged as "interest-group liberalism." After the Industrial Revolution especially, the state was characterized by greater emphasis on interest groups influencing the incremental development of public policies and associated governmental

agencies and civil servants working to support what was a growing role for governmental regulation of social life. Social-class politics as witnessed in Europe did not play out in the United States. Lowi concluded that competition among interest groups would assure this, because class unity is avoided and replaced by pluralist forms of state. Thus, liberalism as a philosophy of the state and citizenship in the early twentieth century sought greater separation between the state and the economy, and treated politics as an arena for conflict with governance left to the bureaucrats and the emerging class of civil servants loyal to the ideals of the craft of governing.

As he witnessed the social changes of the 1960s, Lowi hinted at yet another shift in how citizenship would be defined in the United States, especially at the end of the twentieth century. But Lowi argued that the changes of the last half of the twentieth century would threaten earlier forms of the liberal state. He warned of dangers that would come from excessive interest-group liberalism. Some of these paradoxes have become central to the research agenda in political sociology:

1. atrophy of institutions of popular control, resulting in a tendency to turn things over to leaders. This atrophy would create a dominance of administration and bureaucracy in its negative sense with much greater complexity and barriers to true public participation in all public decisions and a lack of accountability for those who govern;
2. the maintenance of old and creation of new structures of privilege. In other words, failures in civic participation would result in the protection of leaders at the expense of the masses, and privilege preserved for the administrators. He feared that interest groups would become more specialized and deny public participation in the structures. Membership in interest groups is transformed as group membership focuses on volunteerism to a cause rather than loyalty to the agenda;
3. a weakening of popular government and the protection of privilege that are aspects of conservatism or the preservation of the status quo. Interest groups that capture public opinion would create administrative structures that resist change.

This conceptualization of citizenship at the end of the twentieth century suggests interactions with bureaucracies and large organizations captured by the modern administrative state. The consequences would include failures to address widespread social concerns and political fragmentation.

The pluralist understanding of political participation rests on a view that the state is a policy-making system that can be influenced by those who vote, organize or influence others into action, or express opinions. The framework treats participation as a prerequisite for making the system we call the state operate effectively. The balance of power is created through mass participation. That is, when citizens who have been granted the power to participate in decisions and self-govern, and actually participate as required, the policy outcomes create a consensus in the outcomes of governance. Thus, equilibrium and social order is preserved. In states where mass participation is prohibited, competition between factions or military rulers results in frequent changes in the state and social disequilibrium. Mass participation is a key if not the principal orienting theme for pluralist theories in political sociology.

The assumptions of the pluralist notions of political participation are challenged by Marger (1987), who observes that the democratic requirement of mass participation has evolved into something quite different. He suggests that the assumptions fail in three regards. First, rates of participation vary significantly from one democratic state to another. Assuming high rates of participation could result in what Lipset (1981[1960]) called "working class authoritarianism" (102) fostered through the participation of middle- and working-class participants swayed by less than sophisticated or fully informed claims to how society should be governed. Second, the varieties of political participation make it difficult to simply claim that participation is a function of

demands by the masses being translated into policy outcomes by those who rule the state. Political bodies such as legislatures or chief executives do not necessarily respond to the opinions of the electorate. This may be a function of knowledge, as legislators elected to office for long periods of time hold greater expertise than the electorate at large. These legislative experts may be challenged by forms of participation such as protests and social movements, or by letter-writing campaigns typically involving far fewer citizens. The fact that the masses engage in many forms of political influence, combined with the sometimes independent behavioral dynamics of bodies of the state, creates a political process that is more complex than pluralists describe. Third, Marger suggests that there is an uneasy marriage between the governing masses and electoral participation. But beyond that, the masses cannot participate in policy deliberations at all levels of the policy decision-making process. Thus, nonparticipation by virtue of the way the democratic state is designed creates points in the process that invite elite decision making. In other words, the complexity of policy creation may in fact foster elite concentrations of power at certain levels of the state because it's more efficient than mass participation. These observations are common to the critique of the pluralist framework and, as we shall see in the next section, are at the core of the elite views of how political participation should be studied.

Elite/Managerial

The elite/managerial perspective on participation suggests that avenues for the genuine influence over policy, allocation of resources in society, or influence over decision making is limited to a small group. Participation by the masses then is perhaps symbolic, or sufficient to generate legitimacy for the ruling elite to pursue selected actions. In 1943, Joseph Schumpeter observed:

> democracy is not a process of popular participation and representation; rather it is an institutional method for selecting leaders. It is not an outcome (representation of popular will) but a structure (elite competition). (quoted in Alford and Friedland 1985: 250)

In this sense, political participation involves various attempts by elites to manage the political tensions originating from the masses. In other words, participation of the masses matters little in light of the fact that the few who rule are the focus of attention. The elite framework treats the participation as the management of electoral competition between elite groups (e.g., political parties), or the interactions between citizens and bureaucracies, or co-opting the will of the masses into the agenda of competing elite groups.

Through extensive research the elite perspective reveals a compelling pattern in the institutional forms of political behavior. In the United States, about half of all citizens participate in the electoral process—usually fewer than half. Moreover, as we shall see in looking at the various typologies of political participation, the more sophisticated the form of participation (e.g., running for office, expressing an opinion to newspapers or elected officials, or participating in a campaign), the fewer the number of participants. In other words, democracy in America is not a democracy of mass participation. This is an important beginning point for the elite perspective. Clearly, the ideal form of mass participation suggested by a democratic state is just that—an ideal. The political decisions of the society are in the hands of a few.

One approach by theorists in this tradition stands in contrast to the pluralist interest-group model suggested by Lowi and mentioned in the previous section. As a way of contrasting these perspectives, we present the work of Ralf Dahrendorf who argued in the 1950s that participation in political decisions was essentially decision making among competing elite policy groups and not ordinary citizens: "There is a clear division between ordinary citizens who possess only the

right to vote and the elites, who are in the position to regularly exercise control over the life chances of others by issuing authoritative decisions. . . . Citizens are not the suppressed class, but they are a subjected class" (Dahrendorf 1959: 293).

Dahrendorf (1959) suggested that politics in society be viewed in the context of conflict groups that are generated by the differential distribution of authority or power in society in what he called "imperatively coordinated associations" (ICAs). Building upon the works of Weber, Dahrendorf argued that organizations and groups are built around conflicting interests, or what amounts to contending associations for scarce resources in a society. A struggle between those who control and those who are controlled is always present. In industrialized societies, these ICAs serve as legitimations of authoritarian relationships. The ICA is a concept borrowed from Weber, which describes the organizations that focus on various social tasks, such as unions, schools, and government. Moreover, we see in this conceptualization the application of the Weberian view of legitimate power exercised in modern society. This model of power relationships suggests that social interests are structured according to an individual's relationships with various levels of social organization and a division of labor.

Dahrendorf argues however, that the basic structure of these relationships in the social order is a dichotomy between those in power and those under domination. When groups or organizations assert opposing interests and attempt to gain authoritarian status in a society, those dominating will resist, giving rise to social conflict. Once conflict emerges, authority within the social order is redistributed. Dahrendorf does not adopt Marx's notion that conflict is based on economic factors. Rather, conflict in society is based on competing ICA interests. Stratification in this view involves the organization of associations and competitions for power.

This framework studies participation in politics by examining the work of elites and how they control or subject the masses. Elite manipulation of campaigns or the roles of political parties in absorbing social conflict are typical topics of study. The two-party system in the United States is seen by elite theorists as an example of elite rule, with policy outcomes of Democrats and Republicans considered quite similar, inevitably protecting elite interests that are expressed through lobbying groups or corporate interests that cooperate with party leaders and campaigns. The masses have few choices in a two-party system where the winner takes all.

A good example of where political sociologists explore the elite's management of political participation is focused on money and politics. Much of this research follows the elite approach that finds that competing groups among the elites seek to influence politics by raising money and creating war chests to be made available to favorable candidates or parties. Manza, Brooks, and Sauder (2005) find the following patterns in this body of research:

1. political contributions to incumbents seeking re-election create a "signaling effect" that can deter others from running against the incumbent in races for Congress;
2. contributions to candidates build a war chest, which in turn can influence election to public office only in that elections require money. Money helps one get elected to office, whether it comes from private interest groups or party organizations; and
3. "there is little disagreement among analysts that PAC money buys access" (225). This suggests that interest groups that do contribute may have an advantage in opportunities to meet and discuss public policy.

In this regard, elites participate in the political process by influencing who runs for office, building resources for campaigns, and accessing policy processes. For the disengaged or the masses who participate in the electoral cycle only as voters, participation and influence are dwarfed by the flow of resources coordinated by competing elite interests.

Class

The class perspective concludes that political participation is allowed only as far as it preserves the interests of the capitalist classes. Marx and Engels in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* suggest that the only genuine moment of mass participation by the working class was that found at the revolution as they predicted:

> The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. *The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains*. They have a world to win. Working Men of All Countries, Unite! (1961: 43–44)

But the workers' revolution predicted by Marx for the most part has not been realized as capitalism has advanced into many societies throughout the world. The class approach has consistently confirmed that the working class and the poor simply do not participate in large numbers in the many forms of giving voice in a democratic society (Piven and Cloward 1989; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

The class framework argues that the power held by the upper class is significant for assuring that the state apparatus protects the interests of those with the most capital. The forms of participation in a class-stratified society may be symbolic, or may in fact pacify the masses to a level of acquiescence to ultimately preserve upper-class dominance. Such is the class view of participation in the political process. That is, at best, participation by the working and middle classes has miniscule impact on the reallocation of power, let alone policy. This is especially true for policies related to taxation, business, finance, banking, and commerce. As the Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy created by the American Political Science Association concluded, "ordinary Americans speak in a whisper while the most advantaged roar" (2004: 11).

Political sociologists continue to consider the significance of social class to the complexities of political participation. Some have argued that class-based participation has declined with the ascendancy of the modern democratic society since the Industrial Revolution. Seymour Martin Lipset (1981[1960]) argued that class differences in the structure of political parties in democratic societies have in fact become the hallmark of the "democratic translation of the class struggle" (320). In this sense, political participation as party activity represents one way in which the class perspective explains the absorption of labor political action into existing parties and unions rather than revolutionary movements. In other words, the unrest of exploited workers is transformed into a belief or sense that workers have a voice in the political process. As Lipset (1991) and others have pointed out, class-based participation declined toward the end of the twentieth century. We will examine this in detail in our discussion on voting. While socioeconomic status continues to be significant in explaining some differences in the various types of participation, the overall pattern in Western democracies has been a decline in political action based on class connections. Others (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; Przeworski and Sprague 1986) have suggested that patterns in class-based political actions change over time and it is too early to declare the class perspective a theoretical dead end in the study of political participation. These researchers point to the role of class identity in the formation of attitudes and beliefs that in turn affect the ways in which individual citizens from the working and middle classes participate in various political actions. The class perspective continues to point to the significant influence that economic and educational differences have not only on voting but also on protesting, participating in social and political movements, and following politics.

Rational Choice

Rational choice models of political participation treat political action as derived from economic interest or social action that solidifies an agreed-upon or desired political outcome. In other words, persons, groups, or institutions exercise whatever power they can to influence political outcomes in their best interest. Recent rational choice approaches to the study of politics are known as "game theory," which suggests that individuals, interest groups, or even nation-states will make strategic choices given a certain set of circumstances. Game theory attempts to predict outcomes by knowing the interests of the actors and the strategies used for making decisions. In many ways, rational choice approaches to the study of political participation, especially voting, have become a staple in the research on participation.

The basic argument of the rational choice approach was best summarized by an early champion of the model, Anthony Downs, whose economic models of voting were significant to the development of rational choice theories. Downs (1957) observed: "Every rational man decides to vote just as he makes all other decisions: if the returns outweigh the costs, he votes; if not he abstains" (260). Downs offered five propositions about participation in voting that are exemplars in many ways of how rational choice theory conceptualizes participation:

1. when voting is costly, every citizen who is indifferent abstains, and every citizen who has any preference whatsoever votes.
2. if voting is costly, it is rational for some indifferent citizens to vote and for some citizens to abstain.
3. when voting costs exist, small changes in the perceived costs of voting (e.g., national holiday on election day, relaxed voter registration procedures, a ride to the polls) may radically alter the distribution of political power.
4. the costs of voting act to disenfranchise low-income citizens relative to high-income citizens.
5. it is sometimes rational for citizens to vote even when their short-run costs exceed their short-run returns, because social responsibility produces a long-run return. (266–271)

These assertions are typical of the kinds of variables rational choice theorists would study when looking at political participation: choice, costs or returns, resources, and abstaining or participating. As we will see in Chapter 7, rational choice models of voting are powerful explanations in determining whether an individual votes, and the model has been applied to other forms of participation as well.

Mancur Olson, Jr. (1965) offered another classic model of the rational choice approach moving toward participation based not on a calculation for voting but rather participation in politics equated with collective action. Individuals and groups would form into collective action around a desire to create or enhance what Olson called "collective goods." These creations of group action would emerge in the marketplace of political interests such as public sidewalks, schools, or a common defense. When individuals find some benefit to participation in the creation of the public good, they are likely to participate because benefits most likely will outweigh the costs. This approach to collective action suggested that participation in the collective was linked to incentives of some kind. The outcome gained was considered worth the participation required. Olson is famous for creating the concept of the "free rider problem" that emerges when individuals contribute nothing to the decision making yet experience equally high gains in contrast to all others in the group. Moreover, this early articulation of rational choice theory began to advance research on why individuals would volunteer in various groups and associations, including those with political goals.

Consider, for example, the recent concerns with declining voting rates in the United States as well as the alleged decline in joining various civic and community associations suggested by

Putnam's 2000 thesis in *Bowling Alone,* or what Dalton aptly refers to as *the crisis of democracy literature* (2009: 163). As we shall see later, this research laments the fact that over half of the eligible population in the United States fails to vote in each presidential election, leaves more active forms of participation to what amounts to less than one-fourth of the eligible voting citizenry, and has exhibited increasing civic isolation (Putnam 2000). Rational choice theorists would approach these patterns with an assumption that disengagement from political participation of many kinds is a sign that these forms of participation are too costly in terms of time, knowledge or skills, or other resources. In this regard, lack of participation is a rational choice based on the high costs of participation. Or equally as plausible according to this perspective would be the conclusion that nonparticipation is a choice reflecting satisfaction by citizens who require no political action or attention to issues!

Postmodern

The postmodern theorist approaches political participation in a rather unique way. Although perhaps an oversimplification, some of the postmodern approaches to political participation treat participation as freedom to explore the intersections between politics, everyday life, and social identity (Best 2002; Giddens 1992). Moreover, this framework is home to political sociologists who conclude that politics after the modern era is about redefining citizenship through the construction of new categories of inclusion, exclusion, identity, and political association. Social solidarity to create new political groupings around what some would call social narratives is designed to challenge more traditional conceptualizations of citizenship, including the nature of political participation.

We can begin to understand the postmodern view of political participation by considering the critical assumption that life at the beginning of the twenty-first century is guided heavily by consumerism, technology, globalization, and distrust in the traditional forms of political participation. One of the key figures in this framework is Zygmunt Bauman (1997), who has suggested that societies today are composed of individuals who move from one social context to another and fail to commit to the long-standing traditions of using politics or science to understand and act in the social world. He identifies four types of postmodern personalities migrating from one context or social situation to another:

1. the stroller—someone who perhaps is oriented by superficial things, especially related to fashion or looks;
2. the vagabond—the nomad who finds no particular social identity upon which to land or settle;
3. the tourist—seeks out social lives as a way to experience new or different things, perhaps even treating life as movement from one entertainment setting to the next; and
4. the player—it's about the social game and being strategic in how the social game itself is played; the player is never committed to an idea or goal or outcome, but rather just plays the game. (Bauman 1996)

These personality types created by the social conditions of the postmodern era are indicative of what Bauman describes in many works as the altered patterns of social interaction. Thus, politics is seen as politics of self-identity and one participates by playing the definitions of self projected into the public sphere.

What does this have to do with political participation? As we shall see in Chapter 8, some political sociologists argue that political and social activism around lifestyles, consumerism, feminism, race, and sexualities are all oriented by this exploration of multiple social identities.

These new social movements are forms of political activism not oriented around labor or social-class concerns, and the fight for civil rights per se, but rather are movements organized to construct challenges to what are perceived as dominant identities. Consider too, for example, how Internet technology provides a place for individuals to pose as gay or bisexual and take on this identity on a Web site or in a chatroom. They may play the game of advancing the identity, or pass from one chatroom to the next trying on new sexual identities. This is political participation in the postmodern sense in that power is personal and expressed in a sphere of public space. In other words, the technology for the new social movement provides a noninstitutional social context for use namely through the power of reconstructing identities. Bauman and others would note that the freedom that comes from the postmodern social condition is the freedom to exercise power around identity, everyday practices, or newly created social groupings and connections.

Another example of the postmodern treatment of politics is that offered by Jurgen Habermas (1989a, 1989b), a sociologist associated with the famous Frankfurt School in Germany. In many ways, Habermas is interested in preserving democracy by exposing ways in which advanced capitalism distorts more traditional notions of democracy. For example, he is critical of how dialogue about political issues in society is dramatically altered by corporate interests to make profit, rather than rationally discussed to solve social problems. This approach argues for a reconstruction of ways to participate in politics. In other words, this framework suggests that political participation is fluid, always changing as persons and groups in society seek out new social landscapes to challenge power.

The postmodernist argument outlined by Habermas is quite extensive and goes well beyond the scope of this summary. But his critical sociology argues in the postmodernist tradition: as politics, science, and religion lose their credibility in guiding people's everyday decisions, something must be reconstructed in its place. He argues for an interaction and discourse where members of society rebuild participatory democracy by coming to reasonable ideas about addressing social problems. The state may no longer be the arena for guiding decisions about how best to address problems of global warming, for example. And so, individuals politicize their everyday existence by being aware of the impact of carbon emissions on their environment, and choosing to ride their bikes rather than drive to work! This is a form of political participation that might catch on with others who also commit to riding their bikes as a political action. Large systems such as governments, or certainly corporations, fail in this regard. The discourse of global warming shifts to coming to agreed-upon conclusions about "what I can do in my everyday" life to participate in bringing an end to environmental problems.

What distinguishes the work of Habermas from Weber and Marx? Marx believed emancipation from alienation and social conflict brought on by capital accumulation would occur through enlightening the workers who would organize into eventual class-based revolution. Weber offered little optimism, describing instead the emergence of an "iron cage" of rationality, constructed through bureaucracy and demanding an adherence to formalized systems of law. Habermas, in the critical theory tradition, believes that emancipation from the postmodern condition occurs through the social interactions between people. Like many postmodern theorists, Habermas draws upon the psychoanalytic approach and suggests that individuals come to understand how their communicative rationality is taken from them when they adhere to a technocratic ideology. By realizing how communications are distorted by systems and structures, Habermas believes that individuals can regain their communicative competence—that is, a politics devoid of distortions created by traditional politics or ideologies. This is one example of the postmodernist view of political participation; redefinitions of self-identity against the monoliths of political and economic systems!

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND ITS MANY FORMS

Participation in the political processes of society can take many different forms. As suggested earlier, some of these forms are a function of rules or laws, others are formalized through social roles attached to the notion of citizenship, and we also find that participation can be less formalized as citizens participate at the everyday level in advocacy, resistance, and politicized talk. There is a wide range of social activities that we can connect to political participation.

Early Typologies of Political Participation

Political sociologists have developed a number of typologies to identify and measure various types of political participation. These typologies have not only proven useful in painting a picture of what people do when they act on political attitudes or demands, but the typologies have also been useful in organizing the large body of research on political participation, especially voting. The typologies of political participation have also helped make connections among ideology, attitudes, and values, which are assumed to be the basis for social and political actions as we saw in Chapter 3. In this section, we examine three early typologies that guided much of the later research on political participation, and then consider a number of more recent studies of types of political participation as updates of sorts to the earlier frameworks.

Lester Milbrath (1981) developed one of the first typologies of political participation in 1965. He suggested that political acts by citizens went beyond mere voting, and were typically patterned into clusters of behaviors. Later, Milbrath and Goel (1977) defined participation "as those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics" (2). These actions were thought of as political roles now understood as somewhat complex and multidimensional. Conceptualizing political participation as multidimensional highlighted the significance of individual intentions, resources, and skills. These roles emerged as a result of a person first deciding to get involved in the political process in some way, such as casting a vote on Election Day or attending a city council meeting. The action then was altered by a second characteristic of participation, what they called the *direction* of the action. Once a decision to participate (or not participate) was made, the action could be understood in terms of duration and intensity.

The roles Milbrath and Goel identified in their typology varied in terms of action, duration of the political act, and intensity of the political act. They suggested that American citizens could be categorized into three modes of political participation: (1) apathetics, or those withdrawn from the political process; (2) spectators, or those showing minimal involvement, who have decided to be engaged at a basic level; and (3) gladiators, or "active combatants" in the political system. This typology suggested that political participation was in fact arranged in a hierarchy, and thus, the typology offered an important systematic explanation for why a significant percentage of Americans simply did not participate in politics. Of course there was great interest in explaining not only why people did not vote or participate in political party meetings, but also what influenced those who did. Political participation was now understood as having many complex dimensions.

In addition to the three basic modes of participation (apathetics, spectators, and gladiators), Milbrath and Goel identified seven specific forms of participatory acts (these acts are listed in Table 6.1). These political acts represent behaviors that vary according to difficulty and styles of influence. Moreover, this typology helped researchers understand that political participation is not a set of distinct behaviors, but rather, political participation is a pattern of behaviors, much like the role set that sociologists describe for all members of society. Like other social roles,

those associated with political participation are a function of skill, time, and energy. Clearly, the strength of this typology then was to identify the forms of participation common to democratic systems, and raise questions about what factors might change political participation. For example, what influences the likelihood that an individual will give the time and energy to protest or write a letter to the editor?

At about the same time, Verba and Nie (1972), on the heels of the major voting studies in the 1960s and 1970s, suggested an alternative typology. They argued that political participation was influenced mostly by individual goals for some political outcome. Verba and Nie defined political participation as "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" (2). Modes of political participation were the result of what citizens believed they can change or influence, the extent to which the participation involved conflict, the time and energy required for the participation, and the need for cooperation with other political actors to achieve any objective (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). Verba et al. identified four common modes of political participation in the survey project they conducted: voting, campaign activity, community activity, and contact with political leaders.

The typology developed by Verba and Nie brought attention to the fact that political participation was seen as a mix of modes, much like Milbrath and Goel had concluded. But they also found that this process of mixing modes of participation was complex for some individuals. Some modes of participation require greater resources for mapping out an objective, such as getting a particular candidate elected to office, and being adept at engaging in activities that would achieve the goal. This typology suggested that the modes were not equal in terms of influence or energy required to change or show support for political goals. Participation oriented to affect policy in Congress, a state legislature, or local city council was understood as goal oriented, and modes of participation were activated to achieve those desired policies.

A third typology of political participation took a different approach. Marvin Olsen (1982) argued that such typologies focus on the political sociology of power, and emphasize the connection between political action and impact on various elements of the political system. In other words, Olsen's research examined just how much power was exercised by the corresponding mode or role associated with positions in the polity. At the top of the hierarchy he identified "political leaders," those government officials elected to office as well as civil servants who are able to affect policy on a day-to-day basis. Clearly, these roles have greater power than those outside the governing apparatus. "Activists" were also seen as having considerable power, but it tended to be highly focused on a single issue or cause. Most individuals play the role of citizen in the polity, and exercise a collective power in each election. In this regard, influence is limited to participation in choosing political leaders. Marginals and isolates were at the edges of participation in the political process, typically unaware of politics and uninterested in having an impact on the political system.

Table 6.1 presents the distribution of individuals participating in the various surveys along the modes and categories of participation identified by these researchers. While the comparison of typologies emphasizes different variables that create the modes, there is fair agreement among the typologies about the modes of participation in general. In addition, these surveys identified a common distribution of the population across different modes. Nearly one-fourth to one-third of those surveyed participate at the margins of U.S. political activity. The more complex the mode of participation, the smaller the proportion of the population participating. For example, less than 5 percent participate by seeking elected office.

This early research on types of political participation established two important patterns. First, as seen in the contrasts between models, a few individuals participate in the

Table 6.1 Contrasting Traditional Typologies of Political Participation

Milbrath (1965); Milbrath and Goel (1977)		Percentage	Verba and Nie (1972); Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978)	Percentage	Olsen (1982)	Percentage
Gladiators	Protestors	5–7			Leaders	3
	Community activists		Complete activists	11	Activists	14
	Party and campaign workers		Campaigners	15		
Spectators	Communicators	60	Communalists	20	Communicators	13
	Contact specialists		Parochial participants	4		
	Voters and patriots		Voting specialists	21	Citizens	30
Apathetics	Inactive	33	Inactive	22	Marginals	18
					Isolates	22

more influential or powerful types of political action. Yet, most citizens are inactive or apathetic, and at the most, people vote, and that's about it. Using Olsen's conceptualization, the power found in participation rests with a small percentage of the populace. Second, these typologies created two distinct categories of political action that would stay with future research. Participation was considered to be either conventional or unconventional. The conventional forms were associated with the role of citizen, namely voting, contacting elected officials, or running for political office. Unconventional forms of participation would include protest and some activism. These were important findings for the sociology of politics and power.

In what types of political participation did citizens engage in 2008? Using responses from the 2008 National Election Studies (NES), the most recent survey of citizens and their political attitudes and behaviors, we can construct a sense of what percentage of the citizenry is involved in certain types of acts. The 2008 election appears to have generated a great deal of interest, and as a result, a strong percentage of citizens turned out to vote. The NES also asked respondents to report on other types of political behaviors they engaged in; many of those were reflected in these early typologies of political participation. The 2008 results suggest similarities with the past. A strong percentage of citizens vote, and as we see in Table 6.2, about half of those who responded to the NES survey reported having signed a paper petition or attended a local city board or school board meeting. One-third of the respondents indicated they had given money to a political organization, or had attended a political meeting. Less than one-fourth of the citizens had attended a protest or rally or invited others to a political meeting. These patterns are fairly consistent with prior patterns of participation reported in the typologies discussed in this chapter. Emerging forms of participation, such as those that use the Internet, are worth tracking in the years ahead.

Table 6.2 Types of Political Participation Reported in the 2008 National Election Studies

Type of Political Participation	% Likely to	% Who Have Ever
Vote		76.1
Attend a city or school board meeting	71.6	50.9
Sign a paper petition	70.6	51.2
Attend a meeting about social/political issue	55.5	30.5
Give money to a social/political organization	53.2	36.8
Sign an Internet petition	48.8	21.8
Invite others to social/political meeting	41.5	19.2
Distribute social/political group info	40.7	19.4
Join a protest march or rally	36.5	19.4

Source: The American National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). THE ANES GUIDE TO PUBLIC OPINION AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor].

Emerging Typologies of Political Participation

Milbrath suggested that participation was more complex as individuals moved up the hierarchy of participation from apathetic to spectator to gladiator; factors that would foster higher levels of participation were assumed to be more complex. In an ingenious test of Milbrath's model of participation, Ruedin (2007) conducted a computer simulation to explore the hierarchical argument implied in Milbrath's original model. In moving from spectators to gladiators, Ruedin found that higher levels of participation are not easily explained by knowing a few simple factors, such as socioeconomic status or even hypothesized personality traits. Rather, this study argued that greater activity in politics may best be explained by multiple influences. For example, associating with individuals interested in politics and being connected to networks of political communication are just two of many factors that would predict gladiatorial type political involvement. Ruedin urges more studies that go beyond just analysis of voting as participation and focus on a range of influences in more complex forms of participation.

Zukin et al. (2006) more recently concluded that the role of citizen participation has changed significantly in recent decades as a result of technology and social structural changes around consumerism, community, and generational values. They argue that the result has not been a decline in the number of forms of political participation, but rather the emergence of new forms, especially for the youngest cohort they refer to as the *DotNets.* They find that participation for the youngest generation of citizens includes Internet activism such as blogging. Community service also holds a prominent role in the lives of this generation. In addition, they find that civic engagement follows patterns of consumer-related behavior, such as boycotts of products or support for those companies "going green" in the era of environmentalism. These researchers link these forms of political participation to values and attitudes that motivate young citizens in a different way than older cohorts.

In a large-scale study of British citizens, Li and Marsh (2008) classified civic participation as comprised of political activists, expert citizens, everyday makers, and nonparticipants. This framework seems consistent with prior studies that suggested that a large portion of the

population failed to participate in politics (39 percent in their sample), and a small portion of the population was described as activists (8.4 percent). The research by Li and Marsh uncovers forms of participation in the middle of this range of behaviors. Expert citizens (14.5 percent of respondents in their study) were understood as problem solvers who would use social networks, knowledge, and skills to negotiate or persuade others without being activists or without being captured per se by a political party or political organization. Li and Marsh find that expert citizens were perhaps at one time activists who played a role in the political conversations of the polity. The everyday makers (37.3 percent) understand politics as local and tend to act on local concerns as duty, fun, or personal interest rather than loyalty to a political party, ideology, or national cause. Everyday makers, according to Li and Marsh, "typically think globally, but act locally" (251). This typology is a good example of contemporary classifications that regard political participation more broadly than as defined by Milbrath, Verba, and Nie, and others.

As the study of political participation has evolved, political sociologists now treat forms of political participation as either institutional or noninstitutional. Traditionally, political sociologists have divided political participation into two categories: conventional (voting, running for office, etc.) and unconventional, or what some call contentious politics (Tilly and Tarrow 2006), such as riots and protests. Anthony Orum argues that the main distinction between conventional and contentious political behavior is how these activities "*both treat themselves, and are treated by the established authorities and institutions of a society, in radically different ways* [emphasis Orum's]" (2001: 219). In other words, the actions of those engaging in contentious politics are perceived by both the participants themselves and the authorities, or those having legitimate power, as being outside of the boundary of conventional behavior. We follow the recent work of Marger (2008) who defines institutional forms of participation as "legitimate ways in which, presumably, people can make their views known and pursue their interests through the prevailing political system" (384). This includes voting, writing letters to elected representatives, or seeking elected office. But as Marger observes, "when people find that their political objectives cannot be met by using the conventional institutions, that is the electoral system with its attendant parties and interest groups, they may act outside the established political framework" (384). The contrast and terminology here is important in that it highlights citizenship as a role within a legitimate, institutional, conventional framework including the norms, rules, and laws associated with that role. The terminology here is significant in another way. As activism for objectives deviates from the rules of the political system, it is noninstitutional in the sense that it does not adhere to the traditions associated with the role. These forms of political action include protests, movements, and revolutions.

INSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Institutional political roles for members of society reflect the traditional expectations of behavior associated with citizenship. Traditional, formalized means of participating in decisions about the distribution of power in society have been studied extensively in political sociology. Voting is the institutional form of participation studied most intensively. In fact, we dedicate an entire chapter to the research on voting because it's a significant type of political action in the political system. In this section, we examine other institutional or conventional forms of political participation as they too explain how individuals interact with political groups and institutions to influence policy, political outcomes, and distributions of power. These types of institutional political action include engaging in political conversations, utilizing the Internet for political action, and getting involved in campaigns or being engaged in campaign work.

Political Talk/Political Discourse

The importance of talking about politics as a form of political participation was discovered in one of the first studies of political behavior in America. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) concluded that people discussed politics with those holding similar viewpoints, which had the effect of "stabilizing" voting intentions. Early studies of political participation established the significance of talking about politics and political conversations and treated the frequency of political discussion as an important dependent variable, usually in the traditional measures of political participation (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944). More recent inquiries have generally supported the conclusion that individuals frequently engaged in political conversations are more likely to be politically active (Dalton 2009).

Discourse has also been linked to other political sociological concepts, going beyond its historical treatment as merely one aspect of political behavior. Inglehart (1990) uses the frequency of engaging in political conversation as a measure of political skill. He finds that the rate of political discussion positively correlates with Protestantism and higher levels of education, and political conversations are more likely to occur in states with advanced levels of capitalist development. Huntington (1991) suggests that levels of political talk provide an important indicator of democratization in a society. Knoke (1992) concludes that engaging in political discourse is the medium by which social influence takes place in social networks. His analysis demonstrates that individuals who are frequently engaged in political talk are more likely to vote, persuade others to vote in favor of a particular candidate, give money, or attend a political rally. Koch (1995) reports that reference groups can in fact influence political attitudes as a result of conversational processes. Clearly, political discourse has held an important place in describing social interaction at different levels of social organization.

As a result of the importance of political discourse in research on political behavior and political sociology, a number of analysts have only recently started to examine what factors might quantitatively and qualitatively alter different aspects of discussion. Based on research focusing on political conversations in a variety of settings, MacKuen (1990) identified various characteristics of social interaction that influence the mere presence of political talk. These factors include the value the individual places on expressing opinion, the presence of opposing viewpoints, and the degree to which the individual perceives that viewpoints are skewed in a certain situation. Weatherford (1982) found that perceived consensus by the actors in a social exchange would also influence the overall "climate of political discussion" surrounding the individual. These interaction-based dynamics raise important questions about how rates of political discourse might be influenced by environmental or structural forces.

Conceptualizations of human political thinking and ideology suggest that there is a qualitative significance to engaging in political discourse in addition to the quantity of political discourse (Gamson 1992). Rosenberg (1988) as well as Billig et al. (1988) highlight the significance of discourse in the development of individual political worldviews, ideologies, and political thought in general as we saw in Chapter 3. Rosenberg in fact suggests that research has been helpful in identifying those environmental factors which might in some situations alter the nature of political conversations. The basic conclusion of analyses like these is that discourse represents an important process in reflective thinking, and reflective thinking is a key element in the formation of ideology. Therefore, the construction of attitudes and beliefs about the distribution of power in society or politics in general may be a function of contexts and conversations about politics or power-related themes.

Current discourse about the extent to which the United States should reform health care policy provides a timely example of how talk and conversation are important in shaping belief

systems around this particular public policy. Throughout the fall of 2009, citizens attended town meetings sponsored by members of Congress and various interest groups to provide comments on what health care reform should look like. Interestingly, some of these town meetings turned violent as participants engaged in shouting matches were booed as they spoke in favor or against a particular position, or at some sites were assaulted by other participants.

Political Participation and the Internet

With the evolution of the Internet, political participation has changed. The technology of the World Wide Web, blogs, Twitter, and other forms of electronic communication, like any technological advances in society, has made an imprint on the nature of politics. Because the technology changes rapidly, research on what could be called e-politics (*e* for the electronic forms of communicating in a global system of networks) is only now beginning to catch up and create an empirical picture of just how technological change is at work in the relationship between society and politics. In many ways, e-politics creates new forms of political participation, including political talk and conversation, the acquisition of news and information about candidates or political issues, mobilization of participants, and as some have suggested, online voting.

Research to date has followed the view that the Internet represents a new medium for sharing information. Researchers of political communication focused on television and its effects on citizen knowledge and information and participation in politics, ultimately voting (see Bimber 2003 for a history of these "information revolutions" in American politics). One line of current research argues that the Internet is different in that it requires greater interaction than the one-way communication of TV. Individuals must search, select, and interact with Web sites on political candidates or issues. In his study of Internet campaigning, Klotz (2007) quotes author William Gibson in an interesting observation:

> Today's audience isn't listening at all—its participating. Indeed audience is as antique a term as record, the one archaically passive, the other archaically physical. The record, not the remix, is the anomaly today. The remix is the very nature of the digital. Today, an endless, recombinant, and fundamentally social process generates countless hours of creative product. (3)

Thus transmission of political information and knowledge online is different in that the online experience itself is participatory. Rather than receiving information as on TV, the Internet provides a social space for citizens to combine or actively engage information sources about candidates.

A number of studies find that in spite of the exponential possibilities for information shared through Internet interactions, the overall effect of the Internet on institutional political participation to date is minimal. Tolbert and McNeal (2003) studied recent NES to determine what impact online information had on voting. Those who reported gathering greater online information on politics were more likely to have voted in 1998 and 2000. But this may be because individuals who seek out online political information are more likely to vote anyway or are more politically engaged to begin with. In his studies of the NES, Bimber (2003) concludes that citizens who found information online "had not changed levels of engagements in any substantial way" (224). Early clues suggest, however, that the Internet may be a useful tool in mobilizing supporters for candidates or causes, and for increasing donations to the campaign or distributing information about rallies and meetings.

Other researchers are looking at the effects of Internet political activity on factors associated with political participation, such as trust in the political system or feelings of overall political

efficacy. Shah, Kwak, and Holbert (2001) found a relationship between information gained on the Internet and increased feelings of trust and efficacy. Bimber's (2003) study extended these findings and revealed that persons who get political information online are more likely to mistrust traditional news sources (e.g., TV or newspapers) and place greater stock in personal exchanges of information from online sources. His analysis of the 2000 NES found that this was especially true for those with higher education and for younger voters.

Campaigning and Canvassing

One of the assumptions behind the activation of citizens is that policy can be influenced as a result of mobilizing voters to select a certain candidate, or collect signatures on a petition to support a policy by a local city council. Verba et al. (1995) suggested that individuals pulled into efforts at mobilizing citizens to work on behalf of political parties, candidates, or issues were motivated by what Verba et al. called the "civic voluntarism model." This model for explaining party activism, going door-to-door for a cause, or giving time to a political party draws heavily on sociological and psychological influences to explain participation. Dalton (2008) finds, "people participate because they can, they want to, or someone asked them" (58).

Participating in a political campaign or working for a political party as a volunteer requires a motivating interest in the candidate, issue, or loyalty to a party. In his analysis of election studies from a number of countries, Dalton (2008) finds that individuals who are older, hold strong party attachments, and report high political efficacy are more likely to engage in campaign activity of various kinds. People who describe themselves as partisans are surprisingly not more likely to expend the time and energy to work in a campaign.

Components of campaign work include engaging in direct contact with other citizens to raise money, supporting a candidate or cause, or voting. But direct contact with others on a political matter can also take the form of contacting a member of the state legislature or Congress to support a certain position. Persons with higher education were more likely to engage in direct contact with other citizens through door-to-door work or canvassing. Much like involvement in campaign activity, older persons and those reporting stronger party allegiances are more likely to engage in direct-contact forms of political participation. This is especially true if one has worked on a campaign where access to the elected official may come with greater ease as a result of localized contact.

Age and party attachments are important determinants to these more direct forms of canvassing and campaign activity. As Dalton suggests, as one gets older, policies related to taxation, quality of education, or health care and SS have direct impact on daily life, thus perhaps fostering greater interest and willingness to get involved. Moreover, those who hold strong beliefs about the ability of one political party to address these issues as opposed to another are an important motivating force for involvement. These are social psychological factors at work. Sociologically, we know that having the resources to participate in various forms of politics is associated with occupational status and education level. Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996) conclude that education is a key factor in many forms of participation. They and others conclude that there is a link between cognitive skills and higher education, which seems necessary for more active forms of participation as well as the adherence to principles about democracy and citizenship. This is consistent with the civic voluntarism model posed by Verba et al. (1995) in that the higher good justifies political involvement.

Conway (2000) emphasizes an additional key point about participation in campaigns, direct contact, and canvassing. She notes that these forms of participation required more resources, including time and in some cases money. She argues that using the rational choice

approach, individuals who are able to afford the costs of this level of participation are more likely to become engaged in these forms of political action. This might explain why older and more highly educated persons are engaged. The cost to them may be lower and the benefits may be higher given that certain policies like social security benefits or tax policies may affect individuals more as they progress through life.

NONINSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The modes of political participation that move outside the traditional legal or customary forms of influence are known as noninstitutional forms of political action. These include protest, political violence, and terrorism. In a study of political participation in European countries, Sabucedo and Arce (1991) found that citizens perceived unconventional forms of political action in broad categories that include legal and illegal actions. Unconventional legal acts include protests or strikes and boycotts. Unconventional illegal acts include unauthorized demonstrations or rallies, protests that disrupt local order, and in some cases, political violence. We look at political violence and terrorism in the chapters that follow because of their recent significance in U.S. domestic and global politics. In addition, we explore participation in social and political movements separately as this field of sociology has generated significant advances in explaining why people participate in both violent and nonviolent political movements of many kinds. As we will see in Chapters 8 and 9, sometimes individuals participate in movements and acts of political violence simultaneously. At this point, we introduce briefly the research on noninstitutional political participation to develop a sense of how power is resisted or challenged by individuals in society.

Graffiti

Typically, noninstitutional or unconventional political participation is thought of as riots, protests, mobs, or acts associated with the potential for physical violence as well as property damage. Certainly not all forms of contentious politics are necessarily violent. One form that has not received much attention from political sociologists is graffiti, although scholars in communication studies and rhetoric have examined strategies that graffiti writers use to advance their political arguments from sites as diverse as Moscow (Ferrell 1993), Northern Ireland (Sluka 1996), and Israel (Klingman and Shalev 2001), as well as Palestinian city walls (Peteet 1996) and Nigerian (Obeng 2000) and Ghanaian university student lavatories (Nwoye 1993).

Regardless of the culture or site, political graffitists have several things in common. First, graffiti is perceived as outside the course of normal or institutionalized political participation and may be criminalized. For example, in some U.S. cities, it is illegal for those under eighteen to possess spray paint (Peteet 1996). Ferrell (1993) argues that moral panic is often the response to graffiti and that the war on graffiti is similar to the wars on drugs and gangs. A moral panic is a process for raising concern over a social issue (Scott and Marshall 2005) where "folk devils" are implicated as the cause of a social problem. Folk devils are often powerless to challenge the accusations. Graffiti is often construed negatively by its association with vandalism and destruction (Klingman and Shalev 2001). More extreme responses occur when authoritarian regimes or occupying military forces perceive graffiti as a direct threat to authority. Writing on the walls in the occupied West Bank was treated as an illegal behavior by the Israeli military, which acted to erase graffiti and sometimes shot or beat writers (Peteet 1996). Somewhat less extreme are responses that view the appropriation of foreign imagery in graffiti as an assault on national identity.

Political graffiti is outside the institutionalized or accepted bounds of proper political behavior and those creating graffiti are often excluded from participating in mainstream politics.

University students in Ghana (Obeng 2000) and Nigeria (Nwoye 1993) write messages on lavatory walls because they lack other means to effectively influence the state. Anthropologist Julie Peteet contends that writing on the walls in the occupied West Bank during the height of the intifada (late 1980s to early 1990s) "was a sort of last-ditch effort to speak and be heard" (1996: 142) and "constituted a voice for those who felt voiceless in the international arena" (145). Although individuals who use graffiti may be powerless or outside the conventional political process, Peteet argues that graffiti is not merely a message of defiance, but a "vehicle or agent of power . . . to overthrow hierarchy" (140). It is an attempt to circumvent the power relationship between the dominant and the oppressed.

Besides being a form of political protest, graffiti has several other political functions, including communicating political ideologies and beliefs (Ferrell 1993; Sluka 1996) as well as creating a forum for debating political ideas (Nwoye 1993; Obeng 2000), socializing with a targeted group or teaching a targeted group political ideas and values (Ferrell 1993; Sluka 1996), creating cultural meanings (Ferrell 1993; Sluka 1996), and acting as a safety valve for releasing political tension that is much safer than directly challenging the state (Nwoye 1993; Obeng 2000).

A good example of sites where graffiti as protest can be seen is billboards, road signs, and other public signs that command attention from persons on a roadway. For example, the billboard in the following picture, which appears to be posted by individuals or groups opposed to

Billboards and signs become social spaces for graffiti as political contention. What emotions or beliefs are evoked by the example of a defaced billboard in this picture?

Credit: Photo by Lisa K. Waldner

abortion, is on a busy thoroughfare in an urban area where numerous passersby can view the message. But note the "Hitler" style mustache (we assume) on the billboard's photo. Is defacing a billboard in this particular manner outside the normal bounds of political expression? Is the political ideology about abortion countered by what we assume an attempt to depict this message as fascist? It's difficult to say for sure, but the allusion to one political ideology (fascism) on top of another (antiabortion) offers a good example of the ways in which graffiti takes on meanings in political protest.

Johnston (2006) contends that graffiti may appear to be the work of a single person but this is often misleading. We agree that graffiti is a collective activity for several reasons. First, while lavatories are often chosen by Nigerian and Ghanaian university students because of the privacy that allows a graffitist to write messages without fear (Nwoye 1993; Obeng 2000), it is far from a solitary activity. As Obeng (2000) points out graffiti is often sequential, with a statement followed by a response. Therefore, it is a type of discourse where participants take turns reacting to each other's messages. In situations where privacy is not possible, such as public walls, participants may organize in groups with members taking different roles such as provide supplies (e.g., purchasing spray paint), serve as a lookout, or write (Peteet 1996).

Orum (2001) notes that contentious politics is similar to conventional political activity in that both are organized and can involve well-educated and respected members of a community. Those who use graffiti as a form of contentious politics share a desire to change the social order but lack legitimate channels of power to do so. The lack of attention by political sociologists to the use of graffiti and other under-researched forms of protest adopted by the powerless and disenfranchised only serves to reify more conventional political behavior as legitimate, further stigmatizing those who fall outside more respectable forms of political participation. Often graffiti is associated with protest or political demonstrations that we discuss now.

Protest and Demonstrations

As Jenkins and Klandermans (1995: 8) point out, "Social protest is inherently a political act, because the state regulates the political environment within which protesters operate, and because social protest is, at least implicitly, a claim for political representation." The concept of protest has been used in various ways (Lofton 1985: 1). For example, *protest* can refer to the "unconventional and often collective action—taken to show disapproval of, and the need for change in, some policy or condition" (Frank et al. 1986: 228). Therefore, protest can be legal or illegal, peaceful or violent. Others view protest as one of the three major classes of action. According to this tripartite conceptualization:

> Protest struggle stands between polite and violent struggle, a kind of "middle force" . . . protest eschews or at least avoids the extensive physical damage to property and humans found in violent struggle on the one side and the restraint and decorum of staid politics on the other. (Lofton 1985: 261)

Eisinger (1973: 13) distinguishes between a generic definition of protest as "any form of verbal or active objection or remonstrance" and the more technical one that refers to a conceptually distinct set of behaviors, or a number of types of collective action that are "disruptive in nature, designed to provide 'relatively powerless people' with bargaining leverage in the political process." In protest, actors are trying to maximize their resources while minimizing the costs. For some scholars, then, protest can be distinguished from political violence by this attempt to minimize costs. Those engaging in violence could experience major costs such as death, serious

injury, or loss of freedom. Protesters use the implicit threat of violence, whereas those using violence are explicit in their intention to harm.

Gamson's (1975) *The Strategy of Social Protest* seems to consider violence as a form of protest. The objective of social protest activities is to gain support for a movement's cause (Gamson 1975: 140). People typically engage in protest to achieve certain kinds of resources for the movement, such as attracting new members, reinforcing solidarity of current members, obtaining material rewards such as money or equipment, or gaining attention for a particular ideological position. At times protest activities hinder those opposed to the movement, for example, by making the opposition look bad (which can make the movement look good), destroying the opposition's resources, or eliminating key figures through political assassination.

As Gamson (1975: 140) notes, "The form that protest takes is viewed as the result of an interaction." Movement groups or individuals in the movement engage in a show of strength that may or may not be challenged by other groups, including law enforcement. Symbolic acts may be designed to challenge the power of another group or governmental authority (Tilly 1970 cited in Gamson 1975). For example, the American flag was burned at a white separatist protest rally in Pulaski, Tennessee, to challenge governmental authority. Protest demonstrations, which include sit-ins, rallies, marches, and pickets, are the most frequent form of publicly accessible movement activity. A demonstration is "an organized, noninstitutionalized, extraordinary form of political expression; a gathering of people (or a person if sponsored by or acting as a representative of an organized group) engaged in the act of making known by visible or tangible means a public display of group feeling" (Everett 1992: 961).

At times social protest activities may result in violence. In fact, violent activities of movements are a common form of political participation (Tilly 1973). Political violence can be viewed as "the result of reasoned, instrumental behavior" (Crenshaw 1992: 7). In general, those who are discontented or involved in some protest "are no more nor less rational than other political actors" (Gamson 1975: 137). Protest is now seen as an accepted form of engagement among groups with political standing rather than an activity of those at or near the bottom of the class system or on the political margins (Wallace and Jenkins 1995: 132). Gurr (1989: 13) identifies four significant changes in how group violence has been studied. First, most social scientists have come to recognize that group violence is typically a result of "real grievances over underlying social, economic, and political issues" rather than pathological acts of misfits in society. Second, choices are being made by the groups, their opponents, and authorities that all influence the likelihood and the type of violence. Third, "authorities have substantial responsibility for violence, either by their own action or through inaction in the face of private violence" (13). Fourth, violence is often an effective tactic in gaining recognition and concessions, particularly if it is the result of a prolonged social movement.

Social, Political, and Revolutionary Movements

In societies throughout history, we witness some of the more dramatic, widespread forms of participation—those dedicated to changing the political order through a social, political, or revolutionary movement. The "political order" in this sense is broadly defined, and can include anything from the political order shaped in public policies, order created through the extension or denial of civil rights, or changes in the structure of the state or regime itself. In recent decades, movements in the United States have brought about changes in voting and civil rights, as well as laws related to abortion, drunk driving, and human sexuality. In Chapter 8, we will look in detail at social movements and explanations for how movements arise. But in this chapter, we consider the nature of political participation in a noninstitutional sense, and highlight a few findings from what is an extensive tradition of study focused on social, political, and revolutionary movements.

Our understanding of participation in movements today faces a challenge in that, as Tilly (2005: 423) observed, "diverse forms of political contention—revolutions, strikes, wars, social movements, coups d'états, and others—interact." Some suggest there is no clear line to separate the broad spectrum of political actions categorized as "contentious politics" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2005). This can range from organizing a movement to change policies or laws, building a movement to champion a social identity, overthrow the leadership of the state, or use violence and terrorism to bring attention to a group's political grievances.

Movements pose interesting questions at this point in our study of politics for the nature of citizenship. As mentioned earlier, Tocqueville marveled at the ability of Americans to create associations to address civil and political needs. The nature of social, political, and revolutionary movements suggests a path that may be characterized by conflict and tension (although not always). Thus, in the study of noninstitutional forms of political participation, it deserves attention. In Chapter 8, we focus on the nature of movements, and in Chapter 9, we focus on terrorism and political violence. At this point, however, we look briefly at the foundations for explaining participation in the politics of challenge.

In describing the logics of early explanations of movements, Jenkins and Form (2005) find that participation was explained by "strains, new resources, opportunities, and ideas" (335). These early studies of collective action broadly understood participation in agitations, crowds, or masses as a contagion of sorts fostered through irrational forces. In other words, participation in mass action was a function of aggression, hostility, or panic. Studies by Turner and Killian (1957) and Smelser (1962) changed this picture and suggested that movements in a society grew out of "emergent norms" and attempts to deal with social strains brought on by social change. This shift in the research viewed participation in collective acts as being connected to attempts to correct problems in society that were viewed as creating stress or strain, or as a way to meet changing values and norms in society.

An alternative explanation to participation in movements emerged in the 1970s, as these forms of challenges to the political order were understood to be purposeful. McCarthy and Zald (1973), for example, found that participation was a function of mobilization and leadership in movement groups' intent upon activating individuals and other resources. More recently, participation in contentious politics has been connected to systems of meaning (culture), definitions of grievances, and what C. Wright Mills described in 1940 as the "vocabularies of motive." A good example of how political sociologists have studied movement language is found in Textbox 6.1 where the vocabularies of motive used in the white supremacist movement are discussed. The research on hate groups highlights the connections between how movement participants use a logic of power in society and how this logic corresponds to forms of noninstitutional political action. The influences on participation in social, political, and revolutionary movements vary as do the theories developed by political sociologists to explain these forms of political action.

The nature and causes of institutional and noninstitutional political participation as introduced in this section reveal the many ways in which power is fluid and changing in society. The complexities of these various forms of participation will be discussed in Chapters 7–9. A number of recent theories on voting and electoral participation, as we will see, bring greater attention to the role of social division, the effects of legal changes, and demographic shifts in recent decades. As we will see in Chapter 8, various contemporary explanations for participation in contentious politics focus on social processes and structures, with some political sociologists concluding that social change and culture continue to be key factors in the construction of these movements. Before we conclude this chapter, we will consider a recent debate about the role of group membership and social networks in various kinds of political participation.

TEXTBOX 6.1

Hate and Violence in the White Separatist Movement

The label *hate groups* has frequently been applied to the white separatist movement and thus it is not surprising that the movement is thought of as very violent. Researchers (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997; Kaplan 2000) have expressed concerns about studying this movement, given the media and watchdog images about its supporters. Kaplan (2000: xxiii) refers to the *demonization of the radical right* that makes it difficult for people to understand this movement. Indeed Kaplan, the author of many publications on the movement, including *Encyclopedia of White Power,* acknowledged that when he first started his research, he expected to find "angry, violent men, so consumed by hatred that they could scarcely have resembled human beings at all" (2000: xxx). Rather Kaplan (2000: xxxii) points out:

> What I found most puzzling was that the monsters of terra incognita, upon closer examination, were not really monsters at all. They held political views that were repugnant, and religious views based on fantastically eccentric interpretations of sacred text. But whatever their belief structure, these were not monsters. They were not the violent and hate filled people I had expected to find.

Ezekiel (1995) developed a typology of four kinds of movement members and their relation to violence:

1. The leaders often do not recognize the link between violence and a successful movement.
2. Typical members are not fanatical and do not want to harm nonwhites. They want to belong to a "serious" group and the possibility of violence suggests to them this is a serious organization.
3. The loose cannon is unpredictable and ready to explode. If that person disrupts, he is likely to be imprisoned. The movement can gain notoriety from this person's unpredictability and the idea that the movement can be violent.
4. Potential terrorists firmly support the movement's ideology. They need the comradeship of the tight terrorist cell to try to accomplish their goals.

Ezekiel (1995) suggests overall that the movement needs the aura of violence to help sustain it.

Like other movements, the white separatist movement has used a variety of strategies ranging from participation in violent activities to voting for political candidates who support their views. In the interviews of 113 white separatists (Dobratz, Shanks-Meile, and Waldner 2008), the majority (59) both believed that movement members should run for political office and believed that under certain circumstances violence is justified. Over 80 percent of the respondents answered yes when asked if violence was ever justified in the movement. When asked an open-ended question about under what circumstances violence might be justified, about 60 percent responded "in self-defense," whereas 22 percent mentioned violence would be justified when it helps the white race.

Major Donald V. Clerkin, B.S., L.L.B. of the Euro-American Alliance Inc., commented on the issue of self-defense "as a last resort in most cases, but always in self-defense. We oppose gratuitous violence—violence for its own sake, violence in order to terrify or intimidate. We don't allow members who merely want to inflict pain on someone else." Richard Barrett of the Nationalist Movement also expressed his position on self-defense and staying within the law: "We would encourage people to seek solutions that are peaceful but yet are self-defensive. So, be self-defensive. Be confrontational. Don't back down. Don't surrender your rights. But be aggressive only up to the point that you are still within the law" (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997: 183).

Movement members have rather diverse views of the appropriateness and effectiveness of violence. For example, according to Barry Peterbuilt, a skinhead from Missouri: "It really depends on who you speak to and what their goals are. Right now we are in a transition period . . . and it

is unclear as to whether or not violence will be necessary. Personally, I feel that violence is a very good motivation for governments and institutions to take any group seriously." Somewhat similarly John C. Sigler, aka "Duck" of the Confederate Hammer Skinheads argued: "Violence works, contrary to the nonsense of popular society, when the oppressed take up arms, the oppressor is forced to recognize and appease him" (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997: 184–185). Nocmar 3 Clan Rock also commented on the appropriateness of violence, suggesting that its use can be effective at times, but it must be limited:

> People often specialize in different fields, I myself specialize in politics. When a problem such as the ones we feel are important is not addressed on a broad scale, violence is an excellent method to draw your views into the limelight. After this happens violence must be abandoned or you can not continue to pull support from the public. (Dobratz et al. 2008: 9)

Others in the movement do not think that the movement should be engaging in violence. For example, Jost (1993: 6) of NS Kindred pointed out how the movement had more than its share of characters potentially harming the movement, including those who believed now was an appropriate time for revolution:

> We all know that the White racial movement is adorned with a dismally large number of kooks, screwballs, sociopaths and government informers. But it is less known that there are a growing number who live in a fantasy world of revolution and guerrilla warfare. . . . At this time, revolution or guerrilla warfare is strictly for losers. The call to arms and revolution is completely irresponsible, very dangerous, and it plays right into the hands of our enemies.

From the statements shown here, it is apparent that there are mixed views within the white separatist movement about the timing of violence and whether to employ violence at all. Certainly, some believe that violence promotes success, some see it as effective if limited, and others are more questioning about whether violence is even an appropriate strategy.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND GROUP CONTEXT

Some of the earliest studies of political participation discovered that participation in politics was influenced by the associations of individuals in a number of group contexts (Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944). One of the first major studies of voting behavior reported in the now classic book *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944) discovered that variables such as socioeconomic status, religion, residence, and group membership were correlated with voting behavior. Replications of the analysis, however, led to serious revamping of the entire model. In 1952, social scientists at the University of Michigan proposed an alternative approach, focusing on three psychological variables: individual attachment to party, orientation toward issues, and orientation toward specific candidates. The findings suggested a strong link between party identification and support for candidates of the same party and issues often associated with the party. Interestingly, the significance of group membership, social networks, and associations would take center stage in debates about political participation in the new century.

Off and on since the Columbia studies of the 1940s and their emphasis on group influences on voting, social scientists have studied the role of group context in affecting many forms of political participation. Dennis (1987) offered an important discussion of the basic assumptions that characterize the group analysis of political behavior. Implicit in his work was that groups serve as some filter for the individual, or perhaps even as a yardstick by which political stimuli are considered. He observed that, "Membership, identification, commitment, likes and dislikes, and such, all filter the

group through the prism of person-centered responses" (325). He also argued that considerable research showed how groups have personal meaning for individuals. Meaning in this case would include affective and rational dimensions. Finally, Dennis observed that groups are an important social-psychological source of attitudes and thus eventual behaviors. These themes would be picked up more broadly as Robert Putnam (1993, 1995) published a series of works in the 1990s that recognized the importance of group membership to participation in civic life. With his publication of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,* Putnam generated significant academic and popular discussions around the apparent collapse of citizen engagement in civic life.

When Putnam (2000) introduced the notion of "bowling alone" as descriptive of American political culture and social malaise, he helped bring attention to long-standing sociological themes. The phrase *bowling alone* struck a chord similar to the terms *anomie, alienation,* and *the lonely crowd* and helped introduce discussions about how connected individuals are in modern society and what implications this lack of connectedness would have on democratic processes. The "bowling alone" thesis offers political sociologists, however, an opportunity to once again explore the significance of group cohesion and group membership and the influences of these aspects of social context on political participation. There is a long-standing research tradition in political sociology that explores the impact of group membership on political participation of many kinds. Specifically, attention was given to the connection between group-belonging and participation in civic and political life. This debate would bring a great deal of attention to the sociological concept of "social capital."

Politics and Social Capital

Early in this debate—and reminiscent of Toqueville's observations—the relationship between social capital and political participation was hypothesized to be central to the "health" of contemporary democracy in America (Foley and Edwards 1997; Miller 2009). Putnam (1995, 2000) initially linked social capital and political power as a result of his studies of Italian communities, and suggested that social capital in modern American communities was related to declines in political engagement. The subsequent research on social capital and civic engagement in many ways would build on the well-established work within political sociology that highlights the significance of social context to politics. This work shows that social connectedness in the form of networks (Knoke 1992), neighborhood identification (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), and group identity (Conover 1984; Miller et al. 1981) can influence ideology, political attitudes, and political participation. Timpone (1998) confirmed that forms of political participation and associated dynamics are affected by "social connectedness," which is conceptualized as anything from region of the country to neighborhood-level interactions. This notion of connectedness is an essential sociological argument in understanding political participation.

Interestingly, James Coleman observed years earlier that, "the concept of social capital constitutes both an aid in accounting for different outcomes at the level of individual actors and an aid toward making the micro-to-macro transitions without elaborating the social structural details through which this occurs" (1988: S101). Coleman (1988, 1990) originally outlined his conceptualization of social capital as a theoretical construct to describe what are essentially by-products of social interaction. In other words, his analysis of social capital treated the products of group memberships and ties between individuals as a transformation of sorts of social action into social currency (media) where exchanges of capital (financial, human, and cultural) constitute basic social processes. The various forms of social capital he identified include obligation and trust, information, and what he referred to as *effective norms* (1988). The forms of social capital

reflect those aspects of human interaction that facilitate the achievement of a particular goal. What emerges from human interactions are "social-structural resources," which can be applied by individuals in different social contexts where action is directed toward a particular outcome. According to Coleman, social capital cannot be studied without consideration of social structures such as small groups, work settings, and organizational contexts. Coleman's framework places an emphasis on understanding social capital as having functions, forms, and contexts.

Coleman (1990) gave significant attention to voting in his original presentations of the social capital framework, mostly in an attempt to provide an alternative theoretical explanation to the rational school of voting. His work shifted the study of voting toward a normative model that was more closely aligned with sociological concepts. He makes several important observations regarding voting and nonvoting. First, he notes that voting is guided by emergent norms much like other choices in any given social context. Pressures from friends and other social connections can encourage or discourage an individual to vote. This model of voting suggests how social process explanations overcome the limits of the rational voting model, which asserts that if costs of voting outweigh rewards, the individual will not vote. Certain qualitative aspects of personal networks mean that in some situations ("differential application of the norm") (1990: 292), norms about voting may be a factor in the choice calculus for voting. Second, Coleman notes that, "Empirically, there is . . . a small positive correlation between social status and voting in modern democracies where voting is not compulsory. That correlation is very likely due to the fact that both interest in the election and social capital are lower among lower-status persons" (827). Voting rates vary according to level of social capital, and the eventual decision to vote can be changed by the context or situation surrounding lower-status individuals and categories of people.

Basing his work in a different set of theoretical assumptions, Bourdieu (1984, 1986) argues that there are three forms of capital—financial, cultural, and social—each caught up in the exercise of power: "resources . . . when they become objects of struggle as valued resources" (Swartz 1997: 74). These resources, much as Coleman suggests, emerge from the "possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986: 248–249). All forms of capital are developed, invested, accumulated, and spent in power relationships according to Bourdieu, and consequently, all forms of social capital vary in volume (accumulated or saved) and accessibility (opportunity to act); these variations ultimately create status differentials among individuals within society. Some researchers have used this theoretical perspective to study participation in social movements, and have found that networks provide the social and cultural capital that facilitates activism.

Bourdieu's theoretical conceptualization of social capital generally focuses on three social processes that have relevance to the study of civic engagement: transformation, fields, and stratification. All forms of capital represent a social currency of sorts, eventually transformed into social outcomes that Bourdieu suggests are practices, habits, and traditions. These transformations and transactions take place in "fields" or a "structured space of dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital" (quoted in Swartz 1997: 123) where social interaction is structured into distinct patterns. One field Bourdieu (1990) studied is housing policy. Here, the landlord–tenant relationship—the dominant and subordinate—represents a pattern of capital exchange and transformation—rent for a unit and obligation for a lease. The repetition of capital transformation in these "structured spaces" creates more general forms of social stratification. Social class becomes apparent in this type of field, and is created by social processes, according to Bourdieu, out of repeated transformations of social, cultural, and financial capital in certain fields. Politics would constitute one such field of human action.

Both Coleman and Bourdieu conclude that the location of the individual in a context of social ties is a source of variations in different forms and volumes of capital. Coleman (1988)

noted that there might be a "lack of social capital" (S103) in some social contexts, and offered an important observation that so far is under-researched. Specifically, he argued that "certain kinds of social structure . . . are important in facilitating some forms of social capital." More generally, those who live in these structures arguably retain less social capital, which inhibits participation in social processes like voting. Similarly, Bourdieu claims that social capital varies in volume as a result of context:

> The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected. (1986: 249)

Both theorists clearly give significance to structures, networks, and social context in creating forms and differences in social capital.

Themes in Research on Social Capital and Political Participation

A number of sociologists have argued that the study of social capital helps to account for the impact of variations in social context and structures on participation in politics, shaping policy, and political activism. Flora (1998) advances this argument, suggesting that researchers give greater attention to understanding social capital as emerging from "social embeddedness." He identifies one form of social embeddedness as "entrepreneurial infrastructures" where community leadership, political coalitions, and citizen support are found to vary, for example, in small rural towns. Mondak (1998) makes a similar point when he noted that "Social capital may inhere in the structure of all relations, but the form, character and consequences of that social capital vary. . . . We should endeavor to learn about the relative nature of social capital as it exists in various contexts" (435). Emphasis shifts to the structural and contextual rather than treating social capital as a resource. His observation extends the criticism often made that much of the social capital research on civic engagement has focused on "voluntary associations" (e.g., parent–teacher association , Lions Club) rather than on other social groupings (Greeley 1997). The embeddedness model of social capital creates a contrast to the rational choice models of social capital that cast the concept in terms of more economic explanations of social behavior and emphasize social capital exchange or accumulation.

To date most of the research has focused on explaining the connections between social networks, groups, and associations on traditional forms of political participation. As mentioned earlier, voting or engagement in campaign work can be linked to having friends so engaged or being a member of a group that urges these types of participation (Verba et al. 1995). Activism in a social or political movement has also been linked to network memberships (Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980; Viterna 2006). Lim (2008) finds that the more social ties a person has to a variety of groups, the greater the likelihood that person is politically mobilized in a variety of political situations: "The key proposition in these studies is that people participate in political and civic activities because they are asked or encouraged by someone with whom they have a personal connection" (961). Lim's research finds that participation in a protest, community politics, or contact with elected officials can be realized even when the intensity of these personal connections varies from stranger, to indirect tie, to close friend.

Other research finds that social capital may not have such a direct role as that described earlier in recruiting, or cajoling friends to go vote (McClurg 2006). Walker (2008) summarizes current studies exploring this theme, finding that "associations are consequential for political participation because they promote political discussion (Eliasoph 1998), awareness of common interests (Fung 2003), psychological engagement about politics (Verba et al., 1995), and mobilization on

issues of interest to community members (Barber 1984)" (117). Walker's own research shows that the nature and tone of the groups an individual belongs to are key to determining political activism. Similarly, McFarland and Thomas (2006) find that youth voluntary associations such as those promoted in high school (e.g., community service groups or public-speaking organizations) provide a context that seems to bolster political participation later in life. What this research tells us is that social ties matter to political participation as long as the ties seem to provide a social context for learning and reinforcing certain political skills. These studies of social capital, associations, and participation reveal another side to the social bases of politics.

We end this section by coming full circle of sorts, noting with interest that it was Tocqueville (1945) who traveled the United States in 1830 and 1831 and observed how the then new American republic was engaged in self-governance. Many of the scholars currently debating the importance of social capital, civic association, and social networks start their analysis with some reference to Tocqueville, because he hypothesized that the associational or group nature of the American "civil society" was one of its hallmarks. In light of the research summarized here, it was perhaps Tocqueville who captured something unique to the nature of democracy and political participation nearly two hundred years ago.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Recall from Chapter 3 that some political sociologists argue that demographic patterns and related value shifts in a society are particularly important to the ways in which political values and beliefs emerge, which in turn affect political participation including voting, involvement in political campaigns, activism, and social movement activity. Two recent studies took a comprehensive look at this thesis in light of what appeared to be a significant youth presence in the 2008 presidential election. This influence was a clue to what Dalton (2009) and Zukin et al. (2006) found as an important generational change in the nature of political participation in the United States.

Using survey data from two national surveys of citizens fifteen years and older, focus groups in four regions of the country, and interviews with experts working with youth in different settings, Zukin et al. (2006) affirmed a "new engagement" in the United States tied to different age cohorts. There were a number of significant findings from this comprehensive multiyear study that challenged the debate in political sociology whether citizens at the turn of the century were less engaged in civic groups and civic life (Putnam 2000). This group of political scientists found that civic participation was *not* in decline, but rather changing. We highlight three significant findings from this study that reveal how social forces are at work in altering the nature of political participation.

Zukin et al. (2006) on the one hand confirmed past research, showing that close to half of the citizenry (48 percent in their study) are disengaged from the civic life of society. On the other hand, they found that half of the citizens were engaged fairly consistently in two kinds of civic life, with one form ignored or underestimated in the older typologies. A large segment of the population studied was active in political engagement or what in the traditional definition was referred to as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (Verba et al. 1995, quoted in Zukin et al. 2006: 6). These institutional forms of participation as we described them earlier in this chapter include voting, writing letters to elected officials, or seeking elected office. Equally significant to the nature of political life in the United States is what Zukin et al. identified as civic participation. This segment of the population is engaged in "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others" (7). Participation in the political life of the society closely aligns

itself with what Tocqueville described in his observations of the American civic villages in the 1840s where individuals gathered in groups to address local problems as well as consider the challenges presented to a national civic body.

The second pattern revealed in their study of the new engagement was that citizens participated in twenty-four different dimensions of political life, which Zukin et al. (2006) organized into four distinct patterns of social action:

1. "Political engagement" included those actions described previously and consistent with past models of institutional participation: voting, contributions to campaigns, and displaying yard signs or bumper stickers for candidates.
2. "Civic engagement," as described previously, was action around local issues or problems. This form of participation involved joining a PTA to address school issues, or participating in town hall meetings about city or county tax issues.
3. "Cognitive engagement" described those citizens who basically indicated that they follow the news about politics at many levels. This form of engagement not only describes paying attention to media reports about political issues but also indicates a certain level of knowledge gained by the individual as a way to keep informed about politics and to comprehend political concerns.
4. Finally, Zukin and his colleagues described participation as creating "public voice", which refers to expressions through letters to the editor, signing petitions, boycotts of consumer items, or using the Internet for political expression.

As the authors conclude, these four forms of civic participation suggest a shift in previous forms of participation studied by social scientists in the 1970s and 1980s.

The third and most significant finding from the study of new engagement was the generational differences in the four forms of participation. In categorizing respondents in the study by age cohort, Zukin et al. (2006) found that "DotNets" (born after 1976) and "Gen-Xers" (born between 1965 and 1976) varied in their forms of participation in contrast to "Baby Boomers" (born between 1946 and 1964) and "Dutifuls" (born prior to 1946). Specifically, although patterns of involvement are complex in many ways, Zukin et al. found that DotNets are less active in traditional political forms overall, and equally as involved in forms of civic engagement as their parents. In addition, DotNets tend to find ways to engage political voice at similar rates of older cohorts, but in different ways. For example, DotNets are more likely to participate in a demonstration, sign an e-mail petition, or participate in a boycott than older citizens. Younger citizens are about equally as likely to go door-to-door canvassing, sign a written petition, or send a letter to the editor. The authors conclude that young citizens are not as disengaged as some may have previously thought. In other words, while fifteen- to twenty-eight-year-olds may not vote at levels similar to older citizens, younger individuals find alternative ways to participate at a rate equal to or greater than their parents or grandparents.

In another comprehensive study of political participation and social change, Dalton (2009) finds that the "norms of citizenship" are changing. Based on extensive use of the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) as well as survey data collected by the Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDCS), Dalton finds compelling evidence that suggests two kinds of norms emerging beyond the earlier traditional notions of citizenship and participation. He suggests that citizenship includes four dimensions. The first is participatory sense, where citizenship is defined in terms of what we traditionally think of as social actions of enfranchisement: voting or activity in political groups. The second he calls autonomy, where citizenship is thought of as keeping informed or paying attention to politics, much like Thomas Jefferson suggested when he believed that the informed citizen was the

watchman of any democracy. The third dimension Dalton suggests is social order. This theme connects citizenship to political behaviors such as obeying the law or service on a jury or in the military. The fourth dimension of citizenship is solidarity, where citizenship calls upon a higher ethic or morality of the community or society, typically an appeal to altruism and helping people in the community.

From these dimensions, Dalton (2009) finds two norms of citizenship and political participation. The first norm he describes as the "duty-bound" notion. Participation in civic life is defined mostly in terms of traditional notions of political action as well as helping to maintain the social order. The "engaged citizen" is the second norm at work in contemporary society. This norm orients individuals to actions around solidarity and autonomy. Individuals engaged in this way are watchful, understanding, and altruistic, while at the same time likely to vote in elections. Dalton argues that these "two faces of citizenship" are distributed in varying ways across different groups in society, especially age groups. Younger-age cohorts—who are commonly referred to as Generations Y and X—are more oriented to the norm of the engaged citizen. Those born prior to World War II and the Baby Boomers are oriented to the norm of duty-bound participation. Dalton, much like Zukin et al., concludes that as the younger cohorts age, and as the older cohorts leave the population, the nature of political participation will most likely change from what traditional models have described.

What kinds of political participation are consistent with the norms identified in Dalton's study? Consistent with prior typologies of traditional modes of participation, Dalton (2009) finds that those adhering to the duty-bound notion of citizenship vote, work for a political party or campaign, and donate money to a campaign. In contrast, those adhering to the engaged citizen norm sign petitions, participate in demonstrations, engage in boycotts, and use the Internet for political activities.

The study by Dalton (2009) goes a step further and suggests a number of factors influencing this shift in how participation and citizenship are being defined. One of the most significant factors affecting this shift has been the growing level of education in the United States since World War II. He finds that the duty-bound norm is best predicted by "age, income, religious attachments, and Republican party identification" (51). In contrast, "Education, racial minority, and religious attachments significantly increase engaged citizenship, but age, income, and Republican party identification lower engaged citizenship" (51). Age was the strongest predictor of citizen duty; education was the strongest predictor of the engaged citizen. Interestingly, Dalton (2009) finds that these trends are similar to those found in other advanced industrial democracies:

> Generational change, educational effects, and the reshaping of life experiences are producing a similar norm shift across the affluent democracies. This is consistent with a large body of research on value change in advanced industrial societies, which argues that citizens are shifting to post-material and self-expressive values that are analogous to the norm shift described here. (171)

Again, these findings paint a picture of generational change and its impact not only on political participation but also on political culture.

Both studies presented here are indicative of the complex relationships between politics and social change. Social forces of modernization, affluence, changing gender roles, and demographic shifts are antecedents to underlying changes in the nature of political participation. Future research will no doubt continue to track how the age cohort we call DotNet participates in the political process at the national and local levels. How this cohort utilizes technology to apply certain political skills in the political process, as well as what issues or concerns attract attention, will be of particular interest. Moreover, political sociologists will follow with interest the trend hinted at in the last two presidential elections that suggested a turnaround in the decline in voting by younger voters.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to provide a description of various ways in which political participation is conceptualized in political sociology. Each of the theoretical frameworks approaches the study of political participation with differing assumptions about the role participation plays in affecting the distribution of power in society. The various typologies, both classical and contemporary, suggest that we continue to find social spaces for forms of political participation as expressions of interest, roles related to social positions, and the interests in changing the nature of power. What follows is a detailed study of current fields of analysis in political sociology related to very specific forms of political participation:

- voting and electoral politics
- social and political movements
- terrorism

These particular areas constitute the focal points of political sociology where researchers have been most active in understanding how these particular forms of political participation affect power in society.

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