CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND
PARTICULARIZED TRUST
The Ties That Bind People
to Their Ethnic Communities

ERIC M. USLANER
University of Maryland at College Park
RICHARD S. CONLEY
University of Florida

In this article, we argue that not all social connections contribute to social capital as most people have conceived it. People with strong ethnic identifications and who associate primarily with people of their own kind either will withdraw from civic participation or will belong only to organizations made up of their own nationality. People with looser ties to their in-group are more likely to take an active role in the larger society. We show the importance of acculturation on broader dimensions of civic engagement by analyzing a *Los Angeles Times* survey of ethnic Chinese in Southern California in 1997.

Keywords: trust; civic engagement; participation; immigrants

Joining is good and Americans are joiners. More than 150 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/1945) found Americans always getting together to make their lives better:

> As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have taken up an opinion or a feeling which they wish to promote in the world, they look out for mutual assistance; and as soon as they have found one another out, they combine. From that moment they are no longer isolated men, but a power seen from afar, whose actions are seen from afar and whose language is listened to. (p. 109)

More recently, Robert Putnam (1993a) has extolled the benefits of joining: "Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors" (p. 90). Putnam and other exponents of *social capital* argue that communities and nations with high levels of civic engagement are more trusting, happier, and more prosperous.

Social capital, as Putnam (1993a, p. 180) sees it, is an interlocking and mutually reinforcing set of values, norms of behavior, civic engagement, and cooperative behavior that constitute a *virtuous circle*. Together, these components of social capital lead people to cooperate with each other and to produce a society that is healthier (Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin, & Gwaltney, 1997), wealthier (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 1993b), and wiser (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).[1] The values and social connections underlying social capital help build bridges across diverse groups of people. When people interact with each other, they can work together to solve common problems.

Social capital produces lots of good things, and it is an undemanding master. To gain the benefits of social capital, people do not have to work hard in civic associations (though it would be nice if they did). All sorts of social connections will do the job, including informal social ties and apolitical groups such as choral societies and bowling leagues (Putnam, 1993a, 1995). A prosperous community depends more on how many organizations people join (Putnam, 1993a, p. 90) rather than on the types of associations.

If it does not matter which group one joins, it should not matter with which people one socializes, as long as one gets out and about and does not sit at home alone. We argue that this argument misses an important dynamic of social interaction: The people with whom you associate are critical. Social capital is important, Gundelach and Torpe (1997) argue, because it leads to cooperation among strangers. If we only socialize with people like ourselves and only join organizations composed of people like ourselves, we will not have the opportunity to get to know folks from different backgrounds. If knowing people leads to trusting them, we will not develop faith in people unlike ourselves. This confidence in others is an essential part of social capital, leading to widespread cooperation (Putnam, 1993a, pp. 88-89, 169-170; Uslaner, 1998b).

People who stick to their own kind are likely to be wary of strangers. They will not take the risks involved in trusting people they do not know. They might worry that others do not share their values and therefore will try to exploit them (cf. Banfield, 1958, p. 110). Abjuring wider contacts means not being able to get many of the benefits of social capital. Instead, when people only trust people like themselves, at best they might become hermits who isolate themselves from civic engagement. At worst they might reinforce prejudices against strangers when they interact only with people like themselves, as Levi (1996) suggested in her discussion of *unsocial* capital.

We will show that social ties to an ethnic community may lead people to withdraw from civic engagement in the larger community. People with strong ethnic identifications and who associate primarily with people of their own kind either will withdraw from civic participation or will belong only to organizations made up of their own nationality. Our informal social connections and attitudes toward our in-group shape both whether and how we participate in civic life.[2] We show this linkage by analyzing a *Los Angeles Times* survey of ethnic Chinese in Southern California in 1997.

Our research, like other studies of Asian American and Latino political behavior, emphasizes how minorities' *acculturation*, or socialization, into American society plays a central role in civic participation (Ong & Nakanishi, 1996). The analysis of survey responses of ethnic Chinese in Southern California lays stress on several social factors, such as length of residence in the United States and citizen-

ship status, that other scholars have identified as important for the development of partisan identification (Wong, 2000) and voter turn-out (Cho, 1999). Our primary concern, however, is not with the effect of acculturation on broader dimensions of civic engagement (e.g., not voting or party identification) but rather with the types of organizations individuals join and the precise social setting in which they choose to become involved.

We argue that participation in the larger society is important because it helps to build the bridges across groups that are essential to solving collective action problems. Whether people participate in what Putnam terms "bridging associations" (1993b, p. 93) depends on how they relate to strangers and to their social milieu. If people are wary of strangers and stick to their own group in daily life, they are less likely to partake of the forms of collective action that build social capital. So civic engagement starts from the ground up with people's attitudes toward others and how they relate to them in daily life (cf. Newton, 1997, p. 583, for a similar argument). People with strong ties to their own ethnic group are likely either to withdraw from civic engagement or to participate only with their own kind. People with looser ties to their in-group are more likely to take an active role in the larger society. Not all social connections contribute to social capital as most people have conceived it.

We expect that the ethnic Chinese in the *Times* survey who identify with American culture and who socialize with non-Chinese will be more likely to participate in the political and social life of the larger society. The Chinese who feel closer to their own ethnic community (and even to China) and who associate largely with other members of their own group will be less likely to join with strangers to shape the future of their community. They will either stick to themselves in Chinese civic associations or they will withdraw from participation entirely.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN: PARTICULARIZED AND GENERALIZED TRUST

We begin with a simple premise: How (and whether) people partici-pate in civic life reflects how they see the world and who their friends

are. We distinguish between people who look outward, beyond their own groups, and those who look inward. The former we call *generalized trusters*. They believe that most people share common values and are willing to trust strangers who may outwardly seem quite different from themselves (Fukayama, 1995, p. 153; Uslaner, 2002). They have a positive view of human nature and believe that contact with different groups can be both personally and socially fruitful. The latter are *particularized trusters*, who do have faith in other people but only in other people from their own group (cf. Uslaner, 2002; Yamigishi & Yamigishi, 1994). They worry that people outside their own group may not share their values and may even have views at odds with their own. Particularized trusters stick to their own kind. They rely upon what Granovetter (1973) called "strong" ties and what Williams (1988) referred to as "thick" trust. They avoid strangers and base their social circles upon family, close friends, and members of their own groups, be they ethnic or religious. Strong identities work against commonality. Particularized trusters feel that although others' interests may not be opposed to their own, they also may have little in common.

Generalized trusters are the joiners so widely hailed by Tocqueville and Putnam. They meet new people readily and presume that strangers will become friends. Their ties are not so deep: Williams (1988) calls their trust "thin" and Granovetter (1973) calls their ties "weak." Particularized trusters have deeper connections with their social circles, but generalized trusters with weak ties may experience greater payoffs. Because they bring individuals into contact with people different from themselves, they are more likely to lead people to take part in the larger society and thus to achieve social cooperation (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1373).

Generalized trusters are also more likely to be engaged in activities, such as volunteering and willingness to serve on a jury, that put them into direct contact with strangers (Uslaner, 1998a). Particularized trusters will shy away from wide-ranging civic engagement. They are likely to see the world in terms of *we* and *they*. When particularized trusters do participate, they will concentrate their efforts upon people who belong to the community with which they identify. Tocqueville (1840/1945) worried about such disengagement, which stemmed from what he called "individualism":

> Individualism . . . disposes each member of the community to sever
> himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family
> and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his own,
> he willingly leaves society at large to itself. (p. 98)

Particularized trusters form their own civic associations, but their civic participation does not contribute to building bridges across different segments of society (Berman, 1997, pp. 565-566; Wijkstrom, 1998; Wuthnow, 1999).

If particularized trust did little more than lead people to join ethnic associations, there would be little reason for concern. However, experimental games show that people with a strong sense of group identity will cooperate more within their group and less with outsiders (Dawes, van de Kragt, & Orbell, 1990). Group identities form through a reactive process as members make comparative assessments of their status and well-being relative to other groups (Tajfel, 1978). Immigrants' cognizance of group-based discrimination in society might increase the longer they reside in the United States and, thus, reinforce feelings of kinship within their narrower community (Portes & Bach, 1990). Increasing awareness of discrimination may lead to political activity; but to the degree that such perceptions foster a stronger sense of group identity, people may be led away from civic engagement in the larger society and toward ethnic associations. Stolle (1998a) reports a negative correlation between trust in members of one's own civic association and generalized trust in people. People who join groups with a narrow membership base are less likely to be generalized trusters.[3]

Communities such as that of the ethnic Chinese in Southern California are likely to contain a large number of particularized trusters for two reasons. First, many ethnic Chinese are recent immigrants who may not have developed deep roots in the larger society. New immigrants are less likely to have adopted the values of the larger society or to see themselves as sharing a common culture with other Americans.[4] And in the *Los Angeles Times* survey that we analyze below, 50% of all respondents have lived in the United States for 12 years or fewer, and 20% have spent no more than 5 years here.

Second, ethnic Chinese may be likely to be particularized trusters because traditionally they have identified strongly with their own cul-

ture and often stood apart from others. Chinese family structure is solidly patriarchal (Hsu, 1971) and extends beyond immediate blood relatives to networks of kinship groups and clan members (Wong, 2000) but not to outsiders. The importance of cultural identity and family structure was reflected in 19th-century immigrants' establishment of "Chinatowns" in the United States. These insular political, economic, and cultural enclaves of ethnic Chinese—organized by elites from various clans *(tsu)*, speech associations of regional dialects *(kongsi)*, secret societies *(tongs)*, and benevolent associations *(hui kuan)* (Lyman, 1986, pp. 69-71; Wong, 2000, pp. 82-83)—bound immigrants together by limiting contact with outsiders and by promoting associationalism primarily within the confines of the Chinese community. Immigrants who settle in largely self-contained Chinatowns are more socially isolated and slower to become acculturalized to the larger society (Newton, 1997, p. 578).

Minority groups are faced either with adapting to the larger society and to a culture not of their making or with keeping to themselves. Although the dominant culture may appear alien, identification with the larger society is essential to establishing the cooperative spirit that underlies generalized trust. Otherwise, groups will think in terms of *we* and *they*, and each will be less productive. A strong identification with one's ethnic identity might lead to the development of an alternative culture that perpetuates feelings of exclusion (Brewer, von Hipple, & Gooden, 1999; Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, & Banker, 1999).

DATA AND HYPOTHESES

Our database derives from a telephone survey of 773 ethnic Chinese, aged 18 and older, conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* in Southern California (Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties) in May 1997. Respondents could reply in either Cantonese, Mandarin, or English.[5]

The survey asks how active people are in Chinese "community or cultural" associations and in "American politics." Civic engagement in national politics is a strong commitment to American society. But people who do not identify with the larger culture are likely to with-

draw from political participation. If they want to participate in civic life at all, their only alternative will be to participate in Chinese cultural and community organizations. And this is the vehicle of choice for many Asian Americans, who are almost 5 times as likely as non-Asians to belong to nationality groups.[6] Although it might be desirable to have asked questions about participation in other types of bridging civic organizations, we believe that the motivations for participation in political and civic life are similar enough to permit us to proceed without too much worry.[7]

Many ethnic Chinese (37.2%) are not active in either their own group organizations or American politics.[8] A fair share (28.1%) participate in both arenas. Slightly more than 20% of respondents only take part in ethnic Chinese associations, and 13.9% focus exclusively on national politics. Because we are interested in how particularized trust might either demobilize people or lead them to participate only in their own ethnic associations, we focus on respondents in these two categories and contrast them with people who have become so assimilated that they only participate in the civic life of the larger society. Because we estimate a multinomial logit model of civic participation, we can only consider three of the four categories. Our base category is people who take part in neither realm. We selected this category because we are concerned more with why people take part in different arenas than with whether people take part in any form of civic life.

The *Times* survey did not ask specific questions about trust. But there are several variables that tap the generalized-particularized trust dimension that we have outlined. Generalized trusters feel comfortable identifying as Americans. They make friends with people of different backgrounds easily and see integration into the dominant culture as desirable. They have weaker—sometimes simply weak—ties to their ethnic heritage; they may even show their strong identification with American society by adopting its dominant religion, Christianity (Liu, 1998). When generalized trusters participate in civic life, they do so as equals with other Americans. Particularized trusters, in contrast, stick to their own group. Ethnic Chinese particularized trusters socialize mostly with other Chinese, feel close to China (and its government), and worry that other ethnic Chinese may become integrated so strongly into the dominant culture that they will lose their own identity. They may thus withdraw from civic participation altogether as a

way of avoiding strangers, or they may feel secure in joining with other ethnic Chinese in civic groups not open to outsiders.

The measures of generalized versus particularized trust include whether people think that ethnic Chinese need to be more integrated into American culture, their religious identification, whether respondents have only Chinese friends, how important Chinatown is to their lives, how often they go back to China, and how satisfied they are with both the Chinese government and their lives in the United States. Each of these measures taps into individuals' orientations toward the larger society and to their own ethnic community.

Generalized trust is linked to a wide social network and to an assumption that others in the larger society share your values (Fukayama, 1995, p. 153). So we expect that people who are well assimilated into the larger culture will be more likely to behave as generalized trusters do and to participate in American political life. People who have weaker ties to the larger society may either withdraw from civic life altogether or restrict their participation to ethnic Chinese associations.

Generalized trusters will emphasize the common culture of the larger society: Although ethnic identity is important, it takes a decidedly secondary role to American identity. Generalized trusters will say that ethnic Chinese should be more integrated into American society. They will have friends of different backgrounds; they will say that Chinatown is not important to their lives; and they may adopt the country's majority religion, Christianity. Chinese Christians have the opportunity to forge social ties with non-Chinese in the church community. They have accepted a faith that is not rooted in their own culture. Church membership helps people develop and practice skills (writing letters, organizing) that easily translate into political action (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Generalized trusters will be less likely to go back to China often; they may return to see family, but their vacations will not center on renewing old ties. And they will express the same disdain for the Chinese government that other Americans do. Generalized trusters are optimists (Uslaner, 2002, chaps. 2, 4). So we particularly expect people who are satisfied with their lives in the United States to feel comfortable with people of different backgrounds and to take a more active role in national civic affairs (cf. Uslaner, 1998b).

Particularized trusters will say that ethnic Chinese have become too integrated into American society. They will feel Chinatown is more important to them; they will try to visit China as often as they can to renew ties to the culture they still hold dear; and they will have more positive evaluations of the Chinese government, perhaps because they believe that it is more orderly and egalitarian than the chaotic American system. Support for the Chinese government may go hand in hand with acceptance of an authoritarian political system in which civic engagement is discouraged. People who make many return visits to China may have stronger ties to the "home country." They may feel weaker bonds to their new homeland and will thus be less likely to participate in its political life. If they participate at all, it will be in Chinese civic affairs. People who say that Chinatown is important to their lives are associating themselves with a homogeneous ethnic enclave rather than with the more diverse, larger society.

People who are dissatisfied with their lives in the United States will be more likely to retreat into their own communities (cf. Banfield, 1958). Most critically, their friendship circles will center upon people of their own kind, and they will stick with their traditional spiritual beliefs, including atheism.

Beyond these measures tapping generalized versus particularized trust, our models have traditional variables that predict participation in civic affairs: education and age. Education is consistently one of the strongest, if not the strongest, determinants of civic engagement. Highly educated people participate more in civic affairs. So do older people more generally, people who have developed greater stakes in the social and political systems (Putnam, 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). However, we may see an opposite dynamic in the case of immigrant groups. Older people may be more likely to have deeper roots in their traditional culture. If they participate in civic life at all, it will be in their own ethnic associations. If anything, we would expect that younger people might participate more than their elders in national politics.[9]

Our models also include two variables that are particularly important in shaping the participation of ethnic communities with large numbers of recent immigrants. Citizenship plays a central role in shaping civic participation. Immigrants who have been in the United States for less than 5 years are not eligible for citizenship, and

noncitizens are far less likely to take part in American politics. Noncitizens cannot vote, and thus, we expect that this will lead them to opt out of political participation more generally. Along the same lines, people who have lived in the United States for longer periods will be more likely to take an active part in the political life of the larger society and be less inclined to take part in ethnic associations. Many new immigrants might not understand American politics well, and newer immigrants (especially Asian Americans) have been reluctant to get involved in the larger political system (Gandhi, 1992). We also examined models with various language variables—the language of the interview, the language spoken at home and at work, and the language spoken in business transactions. There were moderate to strong bivariate effects for each language variable on the arena of participation, but they always vanished in multivariate models. Other social connections are more important than the language spoken.

RESULTS

Our primary interest is what drives different types of participation, not simply why people get involved in civic life. We expect to find both commonalities and differences in alternative arenas of civic engagement. Higher status people should take a more active role in both Chinese and American civic associations. But social ties and values lead us to different expectations. Particularized trusters have narrow social networks. They feel very close to ethnic enclaves. And they feel ill at ease in the larger society. We expect that they either withdraw from civic life altogether or participate only in Chinese civic organizations. They should shy away from engagement in American politics, which would lead to regular and sustained interactions with people very different from themselves. Generalized trusters have wider social networks. They feel at home with strangers and may even adopt the strangers' beliefs (such as the Christian religion). Ethnic associations may hold little attractiveness for them, but participation in American politics should be more attractive.

To examine participation in different modes of political life, we construct a nominal index of participation in American politics, in Chinese cultural/civic organizations, in both, or in neither. The most

appropriate way to examine alternative modes of participation is through a multinomial logit model. This technique estimates equations with a common set of predictors for three of the four categories. Because we are primarily interested in participation in American politics, participation in Chinese cultural and civic associations, and participation in both arenas, the most demobilized Chinese—those who take part in neither American politics nor Chinese organizations—serve as the base category. All comparisons of coefficients and effects of the explanatory variables reflect differences between a specific mode of participation and this base category. Thus, in the equation for Chinese civic associations, the coefficients and effects distinguish between participation in these ethnic organizations versus participation in any one organization.

Logit coefficients cannot be directly interpreted. For ease of reporting, we present the *mean effects* for the variables in Table 1. The mean or first-order effect is the difference in estimated probabilities from each predictor's highest and lowest values, letting the other independent variables assume their mean or *natural* values (Gill, 2000; Liao, 1994, pp. 16-21). The effects show the predicted change in probability of the explanatory variables for each of the nominal categories compared to the base category. These mean effects allow us to gauge the substantive significance of the predictors. For continuous variables in the model (e.g., length of U.S. residence, education, and age), we calculate interval changes in probabilities and discuss the results in the text to place the mean effects into perspective. For example, rather than use the entire range of values for length of residency, we can compare the change in probability of participating in civic associations for an individual living in the United States for 1 year and then for 5 years.

Overall, our estimates show that the differences are far more powerful than the similarities in what shapes participation across arenas. Particularized trusters either withdraw from civic engagement altogether or participate only in associations of their own group. Ethnic associations, however, are not necessarily one-way streets to isolation. Joining an ethnic organization does not mean that you are a particularized truster. As our analysis will detail, people who participate in both their own ethnic groups and engage in American politics may be building bridges to the larger civic community; but to a large degree they resemble people who take part only in national politics.

Let us begin by examining the influences on respondents who take part in both American politics and organizations in the Chinese community compared to the most demobilized respondents who shun civic engagement in American politics and ethnic organizations. People who opt out of civic life have few social ties beyond their immediate community. Our surrogate measures of particularized trust, especially the importance of Chinatown, are potent predictors of whether people eschew civic participation totally or choose to forge ties across social arenas. The strongest predictor of participation in both realms is connections to the ethnic community. People who view Chinatown as important are about 43% less likely to take part in both American politics and Chinese organizations compared to people who participate in neither realm. Social ties are also important. Having only Chinese friends reinforces the choice of participating in neither realm by slightly more than 7%. And people who feel that ethnic Chinese have made too much effort to integrate into American culture are 8.6% less likely to engage in organizations in both milieus compared to people who say that ethnic Chinese should do more. They see no reason to take part in civic associations because they view the Chinese community as separate from American society.

Citizenship spurs engagement in civic life. Ethnic Chinese who have made the effort to become citizens have stronger incentives to join organizations of both varieties and are 16% more likely to participate across social spheres. Noncitizens, of course, have fewer reasons or opportunities to take part in American politics. Christians are slightly more likely to participate in both realms (by 3%). But other measures—ranging from how long people have lived in the United States to what their views of the Chinese government are and how frequently people return to China—are not significant.

The portrait thus far lends considerable support to our hypothesis that social contacts and respondents' perceptions of their in-group's place in American society are strong determinants of participation. Of course, other variables matter too: Less educated people and older people are less likely to participate in civic affairs at all (see Table 1). For most people, participation in civic life increases with age (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). For ethnic Chinese, like other minorities, we see the reverse pattern. Older individuals are less acculturalized to the larger society and are less likely to engage in the

TABLE 1

Multinomial Logit Estimation of Participation in American Politics and Chinese Organizations

| | Type of Participation | | | | | | | | |
| | American Politics | | | Chinese In-Groups | | | Both | | |
Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Mean Effect	Coefficient	SE	Mean Effect	Coefficient	SE	Mean Effect
Importance of Chinatown	-0.454*	0.279	-.011	-0.338**	0.194	-.024	0.799****	0.200	-.425
Only Chinese friends	-2.72***	0.907	-.119	0.311	0.293	.129	-0.572	0.329	-.071
U.S. citizen	1.81****	0.516	.094	-0.088	0.287–.123	1.22****	0.326	.163	.150
Length of U.S. residence	0.001	0.029	.004	-0.047**	0.024	-.216	0.016	0.020	
Frequency of return visits to China	-0.007	0.093	-.000	0.046	0.064	.063	-0.041	0.065	-.056
Evaluation of Chinese integration into American culture	-0.526*	0.406	-.035	-0.443*	0.275	-.082	-0.491**	0.280	-.086
Christian	-1.53**	0.397**	.093	0.759****	0.299	.054	0.762***	0.307	.029
Satisfaction with Chinese government	-0.269*	0.192	-.033	-0.332***	0.130	-.170	-0.191	0.142	-.004
Education	0.008	0.098	.066	0.151***	0.064	.123	0.186****	0.068	.180
Age	-0.042***	0.015	-.127	0.001	0.009	.129	-0.024***	0.010	-.160
Life satisfaction	-0.406**	0.195	-.114	0.0950	0.113	.161	-0.133	0.125	-.087
Constant	3.23**	1.92		1.51	1.31		3.34***	1.37	

n of cases = 444

$-2 \times$ Log Likelihood = 1,005.27

Model χ^2 = 147.02****

NOTE: Coefficients are maximum likelihood estimates. Base category for the analysis is "taking part in neither American politics nor Chinese organizations."
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$. ****$p < .001$. All one-tailed tests.

civic realm generally, just as they are less likely to turn out to vote (Cho, 1999, p. 1144). An 18-year-old individual is approximately 9% more likely to participate in American politics as well as both types of organizations compared to a 50-year-old individual. Overall, particularized trusters—those who have mainly Chinese friends, believe that ethnic Chinese are too much integrated into American society, say that Chinatown is very important to them, and maintain traditional religions (or none at all)—are the most likely to opt out of civic life.

Culture also has a powerful impact on participation in American politics. The strongest predictors of engagement in the wider society are social connections: People with only Chinese friends are almost 12% less likely to participate in American politics. Christians are more than 9% more likely to take part. Of course, citizens are also more likely to take part in political life (by 9.4%). But although length of residence has been shown to affect the development of partisan identification among Asian immigrants (Wong, 2000, p. 347), the variable has neither statistical nor substantive significance in the model. Culture has a more prominent effect on civic engagement. In fact, many of the measures of particularized trust (the importance of Chinatown, the evaluation of Chinese integration into American culture, satisfaction with the Chinese government, and frequency of travel back to China) have only modest effects, though in each case the coefficients are signed in the expected direction. The key point that merits reemphasis is that the most important determinants of participation in American politics—just as in the case of joining both types of organizations—are friendship bonds outside the Chinese community, citizenship, and, to a lesser degree, Christianity.[10]

The only variables that have equal or greater effects on the breadth of friendship circles are life satisfaction (effect = .114) and age (effect = û.127). Once again, older people are less likely to participate in American politics. The effect of age on participation in American politics is both powerful and virtually monotonically decreasing for ethnic Chinese. In contrast to the well-worn generalization that older Americans participate more in politics and that the young are disengaged until they gain a stake in the society, we find that 59% of ethnic Chinese between the ages of 18 and 24 take part in national political life, compared to 35% to 40% of middle-aged respondents (aged 40-69) and just 20% of people 70 and older. In contrast, just 14% of young

people, 56% to 81% of people aged 40 to 69, and almost three quarters of people 70 and older claimed to have voted in the 1998 congressional elections.[11] Thus, ethnic Chinese participation in American politics is heavily influenced by cultural factors.

Participation in Chinese ethnic organizations also depends strongly on cultural factors. The largest effects come from ties to the old country. Someone who has spent just 1 year in the United States is 22% more likely to join a Chinese club than someone who has been here 30 years. And people who have positive views of the Chinese government are 17% less likely to take part in ethnic organizations (and they are also less likely to take part in American politics or both types of organizations). Ethnic Chinese who view the regime in Beijing positively withdraw from all forms of civic engagement. But the impact is particularly great for Chinese ethnic associations. The effects are most pronounced for ethnic Chinese who were born in the United States—for them, participation in Chinese ethnic associations seems to be a way of protesting the authoritarian government in China that discourages democratic participation.

Respondents who feel that ethnic Chinese have made too much effort to integrate into American culture are slightly less than 8% less likely to join ethnic organizations. And Christians, perhaps surprisingly, are slightly more likely (by about 5%) to take part in ethnic organizations. Yet this result is not quite so unexpected when we recognize that the comparison is with people who withdraw from all forms of civic activism. Similarly, respondents who say that Chinatown is important to them are more likely to withdraw from civic life altogether rather than join Chinese organizations, although not by much (effect = û.024).

Other variables in the model do not reach significance but are signed in the expected direction. American citizens are less likely to take part in only ethnic organizations (effect = û.123), and those who make frequent return visits to China (effect = .063) and have only Chinese friends (effect = .129) are more likely take part only in Chinese groups. Although older people do not take part in the larger society (or in both arenas), there is no age gap in participation for ethnic Chinese organizations. So older ethnic Chinese may not feel comfortable taking part in American political life, but they are not reluctant to join with people like themselves. And whether peoples' circles of friends

are mixed ethnically or Chinese only has little to do with joining Chinese organizations. Apparently, how long a person has lived in the United States, rather than the current mix of friends, is more important for membership in ethnic clubs.

Rather broadly, the same factors that hinder participation across social spheres and in American politics also impede participation in ethnic organizations. But beyond this sweeping statement, we see the sharpest division between people who take part in American politics and those who do not. The equations for participation in American politics and in both realms are similar to one another. Yet there are some key differences: The importance of Chinatown and levels of education matter a lot only for participation in both arenas (although it is unclear why either should be the case). And there are some similarities across all three equations: Being a Christian and believing that Chinese people should be better integrated into American culture lead people to become more participatory. And saying that Chinatown is very important to their lives makes people less likely to join any civic organization.

But there are some key differences between the determinants of participation in American politics and participation in only Chinese cultural organizations. Not surprisingly, being an American citizen matters only for participation in American politics. And having a diverse circle of friends only seems to affect participation in the larger society. Wide social networks appear to lead people to expand their scope of participation but not to forsake their own ethnic organizations. However, when we reestimate the model in Table 1 using participation in both arenas as the base category, we find a powerful effect for the mix of friends in the equation for joining Chinese clubs. Having a diverse group of friends makes a respondent almost 30% more likely both to join Chinese organizations and to take part in American politics. Overall, then, people with a wide mix of friends may join ethnic associations, but they are much more likely to take part in American civic and political life more generally.

In contrast, length of residence in the United States and evaluations of the Chinese government shape participation in Chinese civic organizations, but not participation in American politics more generally. Both of these variables reflect ties to the old country, although their impacts are rather different. New Chinese immigrants—much like

many other ethnic groups before them—seek out their fellow countrymen for companionship. They may also perceive American politics as too complicated and too distant to warrant their attention. And people who are dissatisfied with the Chinese government are more likely to take part in all arenas of civic life, but especially in ethnic organizations. Although ethnic Chinese born in the United States who disapprove of the communist government are more likely to join ethnic organizations, they are not more prone to take part in American politics. Instead, ethnic Chinese who both dislike the Beijing regime and were born in Hong Kong are more likely to take part in American politics.[12]

In our separate estimate for participation in neither arena (with participation in both arenas as the base category), the strongest predictors are (in order) the importance of Chinatown (effect = .238), education (û.201), how long the respondent has lived in the United States (û.176), identification as a Christian (û.106), citizenship (û.105), believing that Chinese immigrants have tried to assimilate too much (.102), and satisfaction with the Chinese government (.098). There are also more modest effects for having only Chinese friends (.048) and for age (.055). Ethnic Chinese people who feel strongly attached to their own communities, who believe that they have been pressed too strongly to assimilate, who have few non-Chinese friends, who have not lived in the United States for a long time, who have little education, and who identify with the Chinese regime are not more likely to join ethnic organizations. Instead, they are more likely to withdraw from civic life completely.

Overall, then, cultural factors play a key role in shaping civic engagement of ethnic Chinese people in Southern California. There is no single pattern of how culture shapes civic engagement. Social networks and legal status are the most important factors shaping participation in the political life of the larger society. The key dividing line in ethnic Chinese activism is participation in the larger society, so the same forces that shape engagement in American politics determine participation in both realms. On the other hand, ties to China rather than the mix of friends have the most powerful effects on membership in Chinese civic associations. And it is easy to see why citizenship should not matter for ethnic cultural associations.

When we look at why people do not participate in any arena, we see the full range of cultural factors coming into play. The more people are burrowed into their own ethnic identities, the more likely they are to withdraw from civic life entirely. They will not simply join ethnic organizations.

CULTURAL SYNDROMES
AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Our results suggest that factors associated with generalized trust foster participation in American politics, whereas attitudes and social networks associated with particularized trust lead people either to withdraw from civic life or to participate only in ethnic organizations. The scattered pattern of coefficients and effects does not allow us to argue conclusively that there is a single syndrome that drives some people toward participation in the larger society and others away from such engagement (and to either withdrawal or activity only in ethnic organizations. There are two ways that we can investigate this claim.

First, we estimate the probability that a hypothetical respondent who is strongly acculturated into American society (and thus ranks high on generalized trust and low on particularized trust) will take part in ethnic organizations, American politics, both activities, or neither activity.[13] Then we estimate the probability of a hypothetical respondent who is not well acculturated (ranking high on particularized trust). Hypothetical respondents who are strongly attached to the larger society, are citizens, say that Chinatown is not very important in their lives, have lived in the United States for 30 years or more, say that ethnic Chinese should do more to integrate themselves into American culture, identify themselves as Christians, have low regard for the government of China and never make return visits, and have friends of different races. People with minimal acculturation (who are likely to be particularized trusters) display just the opposite pattern: They are not citizens, have arrived in the United States within the past year, believe that ethnic Chinese have done too much to integrate into American society, support the Chinese government and go back to China often, are not Christian, and have only Chinese friends.

Strong acculturation leads people to be more likely to participate in American politics, especially compared to weakly acculturated respondents. The probability that a strongly acculturated respondent will take part in American politics is .223, compared to .004 for weakly acculturated people. If you have strong bonds with the larger society, you are also likely to take part in both American politics and ethnic organizations ($p = .342$), but people with weaker ties will be less likely to get involved in both realms ($p = .148$). A powerful identification with the larger society reduces participation in ethnic organizations sharply: Based on our surrogate measure, a hypothetical person who is strongly acculturated has a probability of only .054 of joining a Chinese cultural or civic organization, compared to a probability of .700 for a person who fits the profile of particularized trusters.[14]

Second, we estimate the predicted values for each equation and each respondent and examine the pattern of intercorrelations between them. If there is a single underlying motivation for participation in civic life, then we would expect the predicted values (which are probabilities for each respondent)[15] for participation in American politics and Chinese civic organization to be positively correlated. If, however, the factors that lead people to take part in ethnic groups drive them away from participation in the larger society, the predicted probabilities should be negatively correlated. And this is what we find: The correlation between the predicted probabilities is –.489, suggesting that there are two separate worlds of civic engagement. In contrast, participation in both realms is positively correlated ($r = .526$) with activity in American politics and negatively correlated ($r = –.412$) with joining ethnic associations. There is a clear line of demarcation in participation—the decision to get involved in the larger society. For people who take part in national civic life, the same factors drive participation in ethnic organizations that promote activity in American politics. But people who stay out of political life in the larger society are more likely to get involved in ethnic civic organizations.

Overall, we find strong support for our argument that particularized trust and the thick social ties that it emphasizes lead ethnic Chinese either to withdraw from civic engagement or to concentrate their activities within their own community. The stronger their ties are to

their ethnic community, the less likely are ethnic Chinese to take an active role in the larger American society. If your friends are mainly Chinese, you will either withdraw from civic engagement or focus your actions upon your own community. Visiting China reinforces ethnic ties and leads people to focus their civic memberships on ethnic associations. People who support the Chinese government may be comfortable with the idea of withdrawing from civic affairs altogether. If individuals embrace the dominant religion and become citizens, they are making a statement that they share the goals of other Americans and are willing to participate in the larger society.

For many people, it is not a simple choice between participation in ethnic associations and participation in the political life of the larger society. Positive feelings about one's own group and participation in its institutions might go hand in hand with sanguine attitudes about the larger society. This is Hillel's message: Feel good about yourself *and* others. Yet there does seem to be a clear divide in the civic engagement of particularized trusters—people who are suspicious of integration into the larger society, whose friends are primarily Chinese, who say that an ethnic enclave is important to them, and who feel close to the Chinese government—and generalized trusters. Ethnic associations are composed of both generalized and particularized trusters. But participation in American politics, or in both American politics and ethnic associations, is largely confined to people who are comfortable with the values of the larger society and whose social circles are wide.

CULTURE AND PARTICIPATION:
WHAT CAUSES WHAT?

We have posited a causal model that goes from trust to civic engagement and not the other way around. We recognize that others may not share this perspective (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 1995). We do not wish to engage in an extended discussion of the causal logic here (see Uslaner, 2002, chap. 2, for an extended discussion). However, we believe that our position is quite defensible, especially in the current context. Yes, contact with the larger society may bring people away from their insular ethnic communities and make them general-

ized trusters. But we doubt that the mechanism for doing so is partici-
pation in political life or even in cultural clubs. Other forms of social-
ization are clearly more important.

As Newton (1997, p. 583) has argued, people do not spend enough
time in civic organizations to develop values as deeply held as trust or
even many of the surrogate measures we employ in this article, such as
how deeply integrated into American culture different ethnic groups
should be. It is far from clear that people extrapolate from their groups
or other social contacts to the larger society. Generalized trust is faith
in people one does not know. It is a different sort of confidence than
trust in people one does know (Uslaner, 2002, chap. 2). How one—or,
more critically, whether one—gets from one type of trust to the other
is uncertain at best. Stolle (1998a, p. 500) argues that the extension of
trust from one's own group to the larger society occurs through
"mechanisms not yet clearly understood."

An even more skeptical Rosenblum (1998) calls the purported link
between civic participation and democratic values such as trust "an
airy 'liberal expectancy' " that remains "unexplained" (pp. 45, 48).
And there is good reason to doubt the link from civic engagement to
generalized trust: We generally do not spend enough time in civic
groups or informal social settings with people who are different from
ourselves and, if there is any causal flow at all, it is from trust to civic
engagement rather than the other way around. Stolle (1998b) finds
only a link going from trust to participation, whereas Uslaner (2002)
and Newton (2002), among others, find sparse linkages at best.[16]

Even if we do not expect a connection between civic engagement
and generalized trust, the most appropriate test would be a simulta-
neous equation model (see Uslaner, 2002, chap. 5). However, with
civic engagement measured on a nominal scale with four alternatives
and dichotomous measures of trust, we have a model that would be
extremely difficult to estimate.

There is little in the *Los Angeles Times* survey that would allow us
to specify a complete model of the socializing forces that lead ethnic
Chinese to trust or mistrust other citizens. Because it is important to
test for reciprocal causality, we break down our measures of participa-
tion and trust into more manageable indicators that can be estimated
simultaneously. Ours is hardly a definitive test because there are many

cultural values and social ties that we could use as one of the dependent variables. And there are also different forms of participation that we could try to explain as well. We cannot use the same categorical variable detailing different types of participation as we used in Table 1, because there is no simultaneous-equation equivalent for multivariate logit analysis. We have chosen to use the evaluation of Chinese integration into American culture as our endogenous measure of cultural values. This variable was significant in all three equations in Table 1. It reflects the normative judgment that Chinese people should become more integrated into American society—precisely the sort of question that distinguishes generalized from particularized trusters.

We used a dummy variable for participation in American politics as our other endogenous variable. We also experimented with using a similar dummy for participation in Chinese cultural organizations, but we were unable to come up with a satisfactory set of predictors for that variable in a multiple equation system. We thus estimated a two-stage least squares regression with evaluation of Chinese integration into American culture and participation in American politics. We report the results in Table 2.

Support for increased integration into the larger society's culture largely depends upon one's life circumstances. The people who are most likely to feel that ethnic Chinese need to do more to integrate themselves into American culture are respondents who are least acculturated into the larger society. They speak Chinese at work, were born outside the United States, are less likely to be citizens, and have mostly Chinese friends. Participation in American politics does not promote support for American culture (the coefficient is positive, but insignificant), and joining ethnic cultural clubs does not lead people away from the national culture (the coefficient is negative, but again it is not significant). On the other hand, the ethnic Chinese who believe that they need to do more to integrate themselves into the larger society are substantially more likely to take part in American politics. Ethnic Chinese born in the United States, who are U.S. citizens, who have diverse circles of friends, and who are Christians are also more likely to take part in American politics. But support for more integration comes from people who are least likely to take part in American poli-

TABLE 2
A Simultaneous Equation Model of Cultural Values and Participation

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	t Ratio
Evaluation of Chinese integration into American culture			
Participate in American politics	1.262	1.028	1.227
Participate in Chinese cultural clubs	–0.277	0.278	–0.998
Only Chinese friends	0.276*	0.202	1.365
Christian	–0.161	0.143	–1.123
Age	0.007*	0.005	1.532
Education	0.016	0.019	0.852
Life satisfaction	–0.006	0.027	–0.206
Speak English at work	–0.160**	0.084	–1.894
Faced discrimination because of ethnicity	–0.021	0.051	–0.409
U.S. citizen	–0.456*	0.294	–1.553
U.S. born	–0.422**	0.255	–1.651
Constant	–1.543***	0.342	–4.509
Participation in American politics			
Evaluation of American culture	0.811**	0.324	2.500
Only Chinese friends	–0.219***	0.066	–3.318
U.S. citizen	0.372***	0.066	5.638
Age	–0.007***	0.002	–3.694
Christian	0.156***	0.055	2.831
Important to be involved in American politics	–0.012	0.042	–0.285
Born in United States	0.320***	0.090	3.542
Constant	1.498***	0.412	3.636
$n = 571$			

NOTE: Root mean square error (RMSE) = .730 for evaluation of Chinese integration in American politics. RMSE = .595 for participation in American politics.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

tics, so the significant positive coefficient for this variable is more noteworthy.

Overall, we see at least some preliminary support for the argument that taking part in civic life—either American politics or Chinese cultural clubs—does not shape attitudes toward the larger society among our ethnic Chinese sample. But consistent with the multinomial logit analysis, measures of particularized versus generalized trust are important for participation in American politics. We are thus confident that our initial results are robust and that we have formulated the direction of causality correctly.

REPRISE

Our findings call into question the connection between social networks and civic engagement. Different types of social networks and different sets of values lead to dissimilar types of civic engagement. Ethnic Chinese who feel well integrated into American society and have friends of diverse backgrounds will shun civic ties based upon nationality in favor of more encompassing ones. People who are not well integrated into the larger culture and who feel more comfortable in exclusively Chinese settings either will join only ethnic civic associations or might simply opt out of civic life altogether.

The big leap, as we have noted, is not between participation and nonparticipation but rather between either no action and restricting life to your own community, on one hand, and involvement with the larger community, on the other hand. The "social" part of social capital depends upon trust in people who are different from yourself. It is far from clear that any social ties can produce social trust. But if people mainly associate with people like themselves, any possibility that social ties could help resolve larger collective-action problems will be minimal.

Social ties stemming from a group can build bridges if either the group's membership is heterogeneous or if their members reach out to other homogeneous groups. In the first case, ethnic groups—which by definition are not diverse—cannot promote social cooperation. In the second case, ethnic groups may build bridges with other social networks or formal groups. But to do so, they must depend upon generalized trust rather than particularized trust. Generalized trust must be present to begin with. It will not be created when like-minded people interact with each other only. So the key question is likely to be what values and social networks people bring in to civic groups, rather than what they can get out of them.

The ethnic Chinese who participate only in their own ethnic associations have the traits of particularized trusters: They are wary of the culture of the larger society, and they restrict their own social networks to people of their own background. People who also (or only) participate in American politics more generally feel comfortable with the dominant culture, may even adopt some of that culture (such as Chris-

tianity), and have a diverse social circle. They bring generalized trust to the organizations they join. Perhaps they can spread it to others who join the same groups. But the evidence on that score suggests the contrary (Stolle, 1998a, 1998b).

There may be some organizations with the capacity to produce social capital, as Putnam has suggested. Such groups must have both a diverse membership and plenty of opportunity for face-to-face contact. And they must start with a high level of generalized trust. Creating the generalized trust needed for social cooperation is not simply a matter of getting people together.

NOTES

1. Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin, and Gwaltney (1997) report that people with many social connections have fewer colds. Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988, p. 328) find that well-connected people have low rates of homicide, suicide, crime, juvenile delinquency, divorce, child abuse, wife beating, and drug and alcohol abuse.

2. The causal direction might go the other way (from civic engagement to trust), but most of the evidence suggests that, at most, it goes one way (from values and social ties to civic engagement (Green & Brock, 1998; Stolle, 1999; Uslaner, 2002, chap. 5).

3. Among 14 voluntary membership groups (excluding unions) in the General Social Survey (1972-1996 sample), nationality groups (which are, by definition, composed of people from the same background) had the lowest correlation (gamma) with interpersonal trust (.097). The next lowest correlations are for youth groups (gamma = .117), farm groups (gamma = .126), and church associations (gamma = .148). The highest correlations are for professional associations (gamma = .444), fraternities and sororities (gamma = .355), and literary groups (gamma = .349).

4. But see de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia (1996) for contrary results for Mexican Americans.

5. We employ the sample weights to make the sample more representative by age, gender, and region. The survey is number LAT0396, and interested parties can obtain summaries from the *Los Angeles Times* or at http://www.latimes.com/HOME/NEWS/POLLS/. The sample was drawn by selecting people with Chinese surnames from area telephone books. Therefore, people without Chinese surnames will be left out, as will people with unlisted phone numbers (or no phone at all); 26% responded in Cantonese, 29% in Mandarin, and 45% in English.

6. The data are from the General Social Survey, 1972 to 1994, in which 17.1% of Asians belong to nationality groups, compared to 3.8% of non-Asians.

7. The average correlation from the General Social Survey between voting in the 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, or 1992 elections and the standard measure of generalized trust ("Do you believe that most people can be trusted or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?") is .186; the correlation between voting and a composite measure of group membership that excludes political organizations (as well as unions and religious bodies) is .168.

8. The *Times* survey asked people to rate their participation on a 4-point scale, but we recoded participation both in American politics and in ethnic associations as dichotomies.

9. Overall, 35% of citizens born prior to 1940 participate in American politics, compared to 75% of citizens born in the 1970s ($p < .00001$). Notably, younger people are slightly more prone to participate in Chinese civic associations as well (by just 55% to 48%, $p < .04$).

10. The coefficients indicate that more highly educated people are less likely to take part in American politics or Chinese civic associations (though the latter coefficient is not significant). Greater education is associated with some participation. The negative coefficient in the "neither" equation indicates that respondents with less than an eighth-grade education are 20% more likely to withdraw from civic affairs than people with graduate educations. We reestimated the model using "neither" as the base category and found a powerful effect for education. Highly educated people are almost 20% more likely to take part in both forms of civic engagement, for the largest effect in the model. So the negative coefficients in other equations reflect the tendency for highly educated people to take part in a variety of civic associations, both ethnic and multiethnic. We also find the somewhat puzzling result that living in the United States for a long time leads people to withdraw from participation in both Chinese civic life and American politics. The former result makes a lot of sense. The longer people live in the United States, the less attached they are to their ethnic community.

11. These results come from the 1998 American National Election Study.

12. This may reflect the effects of British culture rather than direct experience with democracy.

13. For the factors "neither," "Chinese organizations," and "American politics," we use the multinomial logit in Table 1. For participation in "both," we use the multinomial logit we discuss in the text that has the same predictors but a different base category.

14. Somewhat surprising is the probability that a hypothetical, highly integrated person will withdraw from civic participation entirely (.380), compared to the likelihood for people who are not strongly acculturated (.148).

15. We estimated our models using STATA, versions 5.0 and 6.0. The default for predicted values in STATA's multinomial logit procedure is the probability.

16. Newton (2002) cites more than a half-dozen European studies showing weak correlations at best between trust and voluntary association membership.

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Eric M. Uslaner is a professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he has taught since 1975. Prior to that, from 1972 to 1973, he was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Florida. From 1981 to 1982 he was Fulbright Professor of American Studies and Political Science at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel. Uslaner is the author of The Moral Foundations of Trust *(Cambridge University Press, 2002) and coeditor of* Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life *and* Social Capital and the Democratic Transition *(Routledge, 2001 and 2003), as well as 8 other books and almost 100 articles in journals and edited volumes.*

Richard S. Conley is assistant professor of political science at the University of Florida. He is author of The Presidency, Congress, and Divided Government: A Post-War Assessment *(Texas A&M University Press, 2002),* Florida 2002 Elections Update *(Boston: Pearson, 2002), and editor of* Reassessing the Reagan Presidency *(University Press of America, 2003). His articles on American politics and presidential-congressional relations have appeared in* Political Research Quarterly, American Politics Research, Presidential Studies Quarterly, Polity, *and* White House Studies.