Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 3, Fall 2009, pp. 462–483

MEASUREMENT OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION NETWORKS
A COMPARISON OF TWO "NAME GENERATOR" PROCEDURES

CASEY A. KLOFSTAD
SCOTT D. McCLURG
MEREDITH ROLFE

Abstract Social scientists use two different methods for collecting information on the people with whom individuals discuss politics. Some surveys ask respondents to provide information about the people with whom they discuss "important matters," while other studies ask for information specifically on the individual's political discussants. Drawing on three of the most recently collected sources of data on this subject, we compare social network data that have been collected in these two different ways. The majority of our results show that the network data provided by survey respondents are very similar regardless of which network generator procedure is used. These results suggest that we do not consciously select specific individuals with whom to discuss politics. Instead, the individuals with whom we choose to discuss politics are the same people with whom we discuss other important matters in our lives. This finding has significant methodological and substantive implications for studies of social influence.

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, studies of social networks have become increasingly common in the social sciences. This type of research is often conducted in order

CASEY A. KLOFSTAD is with the Department of Political Science, University of Miami, 314-G Jenkins Building, Coral Gables, FL 33146-6534, USA. SCOTT D. MCCLURG is with the Department of Political Science, Southern Illinois University, Mailcode 4501, Carbondale, IL 62901-4501, USA. MEREDITH ROLFE is with the Centre for Corporate Reputation, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP, UK. The authors are listed alphabetically by last name, as they each contributed equally to this research. They wish to thank the anonymous reviewers, participants at the 2006 Midwest Political Science Association National Conference, Scott Blinder, Fred Solt, and Michael Traugott for their helpful comments. Address correspondence to Casey A. Klofstad; e-mail: klofstad@gmail.com.

doi:10.1093/poq/nfp032 Advance Access publication June 26, 2009
© The Author 2009. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Association for Public Opinion Research. All rights reserved. For permissions, please e-mail: journals.permissions@oxfordjournals.org

to assess how discussion of politics among peers affects an individual's political behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991, 1995; Kenny 1992, 1994; Huckfeldt et al. 1995; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Mutz 2002; McClurg 2003, 2004; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Klofstad 2007). For example, using a national social survey of the United States, Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) show that that the amount of political discussion occurring in an individual's social network correlates with his or her level of political participation, even after controlling for a host of alternative explanations. Similar findings have also been made with local-level survey data. For example, data from a study of South Bend, IN, conducted by Huckfeldt and Sprague suggest that political discussions in social networks impact how individuals view and participate in elections (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991, 1995; Kenny 1992, 1994).

In these and other survey-based studies of social networks, respondents were asked to name and describe the individuals in their immediate social environment through a "name generator" procedure. This process uses a descriptive stimulus that identifies the type of network the researcher is trying to measure. However, there is a lack of consensus on what type of stimulus should be used. Some surveys ask respondents to provide information about the people with whom they discuss "important matters." A competing approach is more specific, asking the respondent to only name the individuals with whom they discuss politics.

To examine whether these two different name generator procedures produce different data on political discussion networks, we examine three of the most recent surveys that have been conducted on the subject: the 1987 General Social Survey (GSS; Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2005), the American component of the 1992 Cross-National Election Study (CNES; Beck, Dalton, and Huckfeldt 1995), and the 1996 Indianapolis–St. Louis Study (ISL; Huckfeldt and Sprague 2000). We compare the two methods of measurement on a number of dimensions, including the size of the social network, the amount of political discussion that occurs in each type of network, and the characteristics of the network members. The majority of our results show that the network data provided by survey respondents are very similar regardless of which network generator procedure is used.

From a methodological perspective, these results suggest that the "important matters" and "political matters" name generators are, more or less, exchangeable methods for collecting data on social networks. From a substantive perspective, these results suggest that we do not consciously select specific individuals with whom to discuss politics. Instead, the individuals we choose to discuss politics with are the same people with whom we discuss other important matters in our lives. This finding speaks to two critical debates that surround theories of social influence. First, critics of this line of research argue that social networks cannot directly shape behaviors and attitudes. This critique is based on the assumption of selection bias, that an individual's personal characteristics drive both behaviors/attitudes and the selection of discussants

(e.g., Laver 2005). In a similar vein of reasoning, other critics have argued that the high level of political agreement within social networks (e.g., Mutz and Martin 2001) is caused by individuals choosing discussants who are similar to them in order to avoid interpersonal conflict (e.g., Mutz 2002). Our evidence casts doubt on both of these arguments.

Measurement of Social Networks, over Time and across Disciplines

Though early academic surveys of American electoral behavior included extensive information on individuals' social surroundings (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), creation of the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the individual-focused "Michigan model" of political behavior (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960) decreased the salience of such concerns among social scientists. Consequently, scholars interested in exploring the social underpinnings of political behavior and preferences had limited options. If they wanted to use survey data, they had to rely largely on the limited measures of social interaction in the ANES (e.g., marital status, demographic characteristics, and the like).[1] Their other option was to employ aggregate data (e.g., Brown 1981; Huckfeldt 1986; Putnam 1966; Wright 1977) and accept limits on the types of inferences they could make about individual behavior (e.g., King 1997).

This situation changed during the 1970s and 1980s as sociologists pushed to include social network questions in social surveys (Laumann 1973; McCallister and Fischer 1978; Fischer 1982; Burt 1984, 1985). In 1985, a standard set of network questions were adopted to include in the GSS. In designing the questionnaire, sociologists settled on a content-neutral name generator as the standard for gathering information on social networks. In this procedure, the survey interviewer asks the respondent to list people with whom he or she discusses "important matters."[2] The respondent is then asked to provide information on each of these individuals (e.g., demographic characteristics, how often they discuss politics, etc.).

The "important matters" name generator is well suited to the study of social influence for two reasons. First, using a consistent stimulus like "important matters" creates a common foundation on which to compare the information provided by survey respondents, while providing a sufficiently comprehensive snapshot of an individual's core interpersonal relationships (Burt 1984; Marsden 1987). Second, the "important matters" approach is content neutral,

1. One exception to this statement are political socialization studies (e.g., Beck and Jennings 1975; Jennings and Niemi 1968), though even here the analysis is limited to family ties.

2. The question wording was: "From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months—who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to you. Just tell me their first names or initials" (Burt 1985, p. 119).

thus avoiding bias toward finding strong network effects for any particular domain of discussion or behavior. For example, a common critique made of the political science literature on social networks is whether political discussions cause a person to be active in politics, or if being politically active causes a person to discuss politics (e.g., Laver 2005). Content-neutral name generators are supposed to help to minimize this analytical problem because the stimulus (people we discuss "important matters" with) is not overtly related to the dependent variable of interest (political behavior).

Because of the benefits it offers, the "important matters" method of gathering data on social networks has been widely adopted by political scientists. Some studies, such as the CNES (Beck, Dalton, and Huckfeldt 1995), use the original GSS question wording more or less word for word. However, other studies adopt the logic of the name generator approach while adapting it more specifically to the study of politics. For example, in their study of how social context affects political behavior in the city of South Bend, IN, Huckfeldt and Sprague (1985) replaced "important matters" with the phrase "political matters."[3] Although they made this alteration to specifically gauge how much political conversation occurs and with whom—a worthy subject in its own right—it is unclear whether this procedure and the "important matters" procedure are measuring the same phenomena. Despite the fact that social scientists have become increasingly interested in social networks, this fundamental question has been understudied.

Who Do We Talk to about Politics? Differing Perspectives on Network Construction

Determining whether different name generator procedures produce different data is an important methodological question to address for this growing field of inquiry. However, comparison of these two procedures also allows us to examine the fundamental basis of social influence. Research on social network influence rests on assumptions about how the social network is formed. The most important of these debated issues surrounding network formation is whether the networks that supply political information are unique. Some research implies that networks are not specialized (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2002; Walsh 2004; McClurg 2006), while other studies implicitly treat political networks as distinct and separate from an individual's social circles *writ large* (e.g., Finifter 1974; MacKuen 1990).

One model of social network formation assumes that political criteria are only marginally related to the choice of network members, if at all. Because

3. The exact question was: "We are interested in the sort of political information and opinions people get from each other. Can you give me the first names of the three people you talked with most about the events of the past election year? These people might be from your family, from work, from the neighborhood, from church, from some other organization you belong to, or they might be from somewhere else. All I need are the first names."

politics lacks saliency for most people, most of the time, this approach sees the construction of political discussion networks as dominated by factors like familial ties or contextually determined opportunities for friendship. Networks should therefore be expected to be composed of a core set of people who are there because they are family members, spouses, close friends, and co-workers. While there are peripheral members of a person's network who may be chosen because they hold similar political views or have extensive political knowledge, most political discussion is conducted with core network members. This perspective does not rule out the possibility that the subject of conversation in networks might change in response to environmental stimuli, nor does it imply that networks are necessarily diverse (with regard to political preferences or other dimensions). What it does suggest is that the composition of the network itself does not depend on the subject of conversation.

Contrasting this core network model is a specialist model of social network construction. Rather than assuming that networks remain the same as the subjects of conversation change, this model takes the position that we consult different groups of people depending upon the topic of conversation. For example, individuals are more likely to consult a doctor than a friend when their back hurts, but are more likely to talk to their friend than their doctor about quarreling with their spouse. Consequently, this model envisions political information coming from informants who are in the network because of their political characteristics. Two types of selection criteria identified in previous research are (1) expertise and (2) political views. In other words, people seek out the best information they can find (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Downs 1957; Huckfeldt 2001), while simultaneously attempting to avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) and interpersonal conflict (Ulbig and Funk 1999; Mutz 2002). As such, political networks are expected to be homogeneous, and are also expected to insulate people from new information rather than provide unique information that can alter an individual's attitudes and patterns of behavior (Finifter 1974).

These two models offer divergent predictions of the overlap between core and political networks. Whereas the core network model argues that political information comes from everyday social interactions with a core network, the specialist model believes that political networks are more distinct from the group of friends we consult with daily. If the core model is correct, there should be no difference between social networks generally and political networks specifically. Conversely, the specialist model suggests that political networks should be exceptional in specific ways—there should be more political agreement, higher levels of political knowledge, and fewer "strong" ties.

Data

To examine whether different methods of soliciting information on social networks lead to the collection of different information, and subsequently

to different conclusions about social network structure and influence, we examine three sources of survey data on the subject: the 1996 ISL (Huckfeldt and Sprague 2000), the U.S. component of the 1992 CNES (CNES-US; Beck, Dalton, and Huckfeldt 1995), and the social networks component of the 1987 GSS (Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2005). As summarized in table 1, these data sources allow us to compare the structure and content of social networks elicited by different name generator procedures.

Our primary source of data is the ISL conducted by Huckfeldt and Sprague during the 1996 presidential campaign. This data set provides a rare opportunity to directly compare two methods of collecting data on social networks within a single study. To solicit these data, Huckfeldt and Sprague randomly assigned the respondents to one of the two network generator procedures: "important matters" or "political matters."[4] Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions of each named discussant's partisanship, vote choice, and political knowledge for up to five separate discussants. They were also asked how often they spoke with each discussant, the nature and age of the relationship, and the amount of political conversation that occurred with each discussant.

While the ISL data set allows us to directly compare two methods of collecting data on social networks, these data are not representative of the entire United States. Therefore, to enhance the generalizeability of our findings, we also examine the CNES-US (Beck, Dalton, and Huckfeldt 1995). Like the ISL study, the CNES-US took a mixed approach to name generation. The survey asked respondents for up to four different names using the standard "important matters" approach. However, the survey also collected information on an additional discussion partner by asking respondents, "Aside from anyone you have already mentioned, who is the person you talked with most about the events of the recent presidential election campaign?" The study also contains follow-up questions about the members of the social network that are similar to the ones used in the ISL study.

Finally, while the ISL and CNES-US provide a relatively complete picture of social networks in the Unites States, both studies were conducted during a presidential election. The stimulus of the election might lead individuals to discuss politics more frequently than usual with their core "important matters" network (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004). This could bias our analysis toward finding smaller differences in the amount of political discussion measured by the two name generator procedures. Also, individuals may choose to discuss politics with more people during the campaign season (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004). This could bias our analysis toward finding larger differences in the size of social networks measured by the two name generator

4. The exact question wording is: "From time to time, people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last few months, I'd like to know the people you talked with about matters that are important to you. These people might or might not be relatives. Can you think of anyone?" The political matters question is the same except that the phrase "people discuss government, elections and politics" is substituted in for the phrase "important matters."

Table 1. Data Sources

Study	Details	Primary name generator	Secondary name generator
1996 Indianapolis–St. Louis Study (ISL)	Field period: 03/1996–12/1997 AAPOR COOP3: 57% ($N = 2{,}612$) Sample: registered voters	Respondents were randomly assigned to receive the "important matters" or "political matters" name generator	N/A
1992 Cross-National Election Study, U.S. component (CNES-US)	Field Period: 09/1992–02/1993 AAPOR COOP3: 48% ($N = 1{,}318$) Sample: stratified cluster; U.S. adult residents	"Important matters"	Respondents were also asked to name an additional person who they specifically discussed politics with
1987 General Social Survey (GSS)	Field Period: 02/1987–04/1987 AAPOR RR5: 75% ($N = 1{,}819$[a]) Sample: national probability; U.S. adult residents	"Important matters"	N/A

[a]The 1987 GSS included a Black oversample ($N = 353$).

procedures. Therefore, to further enhance our ability to make generalizeable claims, we also examine data from the 1987 GSS (Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2005). The 1987 GSS asked for the names of up to six "important matters" discussion partners, and then asked a follow-up question about whether politics was discussed with the first three partners named. Thus, it is possible to use the 1987 GSS to describe both "important matters" discussion networks and the subset of this core network that is used for political discussion. Fewer demographic attributes were collected on the GSS discussion partners, but respondents were asked for their perception of the partisan identification of each discussant.

Method of Analysis

In the findings section, we compare the composition of politics-specific discussion networks with "important matters" discussion networks along three significant dimensions. First, does the composition of a political discussion network differ from that of a core discussion network? To answer this question, we examine network size, the amount of political discussion that occurs in the social network, and the intimacy of the social ties. Second, are people with political expertise overly represented among political discussion partners versus members of the core discussion network? Finally, is there a greater degree of similarity in political preferences between the respondent and members of his or her political discussion network than among members of his or her core discussion network?

The primary method we use to examine these questions is examining the information reported by ISL respondents in response to the "important matters" and "political matters" name generators. Again, since respondents were randomly selected to supply information on these different types of discussants, we can perform a direct comparison of these two types of social networks. To further compare explicitly named political discussants to "important matters" discussion partners, we also compare the characteristics of the "important matters" discussion network to the fifth political discussant in the CNES-US data set.

Finally, with all three data sets, we compare the characteristics of the entire "important matters" social network to the subset of "important matters" discussants that the individual reported discussing politics with (hereafter referred to as the "talk politics subnetwork"). Otherwise stated, the talk politics subnetwork is defined by leaving out all discussants with whom a respondent reported no political discussion. This final method of analysis allows us to determine if the people in our core network who we discuss politics with differ greatly from the people in our core network with whom we choose not to discuss politics. This additional comparison allows us to avoid the potential problem that respondents to both the ILS "political matters" and the CNES "fifth discussant" are biasing their responses by supplying the names of those individuals with

whom they exclusively discuss politics, instead of giving the names of those with whom they discuss politics most frequently.

Findings

NETWORK SIZE

The results presented in table 2 show that core discussion and political discussion networks are similar in size. There is only a small and statistically insignificant difference in the number of discussants named in response to the two name generators in the ISL data set ($t = 1.28$, $p = .20$). In line with findings from the ISL data set presented by Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2004), which suggest that political discussion networks increase in size during elections, the network generated by the political matters stimulus is slightly larger than the talk politics subnetwork of the "important matters" network ($t = 2.32$, $p = .02$). However, the substantive value of this difference is very small, less than one-fifth of a discussant, meaning on average that the network is one person larger for every five people surveyed. In addition, the CNES data show that the size of the average person's core network and talk politics subnetwork are roughly the same ($t = 1.91$, $p = .06$).[5]

While the ISL is not a national sample, it is worth noting that the core networks of Indianapolis and St. Louis citizens do not appear to be exceptional in size. The core networks of ISL respondents are roughly equivalent in size to those of national survey respondents in the 1987 GSS ($t = 1.60$, $p = .11$). They are slightly larger than the core networks reported by CNES respondents ($t = 5.58$, $p < .01$), though this difference is likely due to the fact that the CNES asked respondents for only up to four core network members rather than five as in the ISL survey. Inclusion of the fifth political discussant to the "important matters" network average brings the CNES average network size in line with other network surveys (an average of 2.85 discussants overall, 2.74 of whom discuss politics). There are no nationally-representative survey data with which to compare the average size of networks given in response to the ISL political matters generator. However, the average response in this study is in line with the data provided by respondents in the 1984 South Bend Study, an older, local-level study which also used the "discuss politics" name generator (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1984).

One exception to these findings on network size is found with the talk politics subnetwork in the 1987 GSS. In this data set, the talk politics subnetwork averages only two people, significantly and meaningfully smaller than the size of the entire "important matters" network ($t = 13.43$, $p < .01$). The 1987 GSS

5. To look at these data in a different way, ILS respondents report discussing politics with 89 percent of their "important matters" discussion network. In the CNES, respondents report that they discuss politics with 95 percent of their "important matters" discussants.

Table 2. Social Network Composition

	ISL			CNES-US			GSS	
	Core/"Important matters"	"Discuss politics"	Talk politics subnetwork	Core/"Important matters"	5th Political discussant	Talk politics subnetwork	Core/"Important matters"	Talk politics subnetwork
Network size								
Total number of discussants named[a]	2.62	2.52	2.38	2.25	0.60	2.14	2.53	2.00
	SD = 1.76	SD = 1.86	SD = 1.72	SD = 1.48	SD = 0.49	SD = 1.47	SD = 1.24	SD = 1.08
	N = 1,070	N = 1,066	N = 1,070	N = 1,318	N = 1,318	N = 1,318	N = 1,800	N = 1,692
Political discussion								
Average frequency of political discussion	0.57	0.64	0.63	0.61	0.67	0.64	0.81	0.98
	SD = 0.22	SD = 0.18	SD = 0.18	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.24	SD = 0.18	SD = 1.50	SD = 1.63
	N = 897	N = 842	N = 864	N = 1,066	N = 788	N = 1,048	N = 1,692	N = 1,472
Social intimacy								
Percent of discussants who are spouses	16%	13%	17%	19%	22%	20%	19%	23%
	SD = 0.26	SD = 0.25	SD = 0.28	SD = 0.29	SD = 0.42	SD = 0.30	SD = 0.27	SD = 0.31
	N = 896	N = 841	N = 863	N = 1,066	N = 787	N = 1,048	N = 1,701	N = 1,473
Percent of discussants who are other family members	30%	25%	30%	33%	29%	33%	58%	61%
	SD = 0.34	SD = 0.31	SD = 0.34	SD = 0.34	SD = 0.46	SD = 0.35	SD = 0.38	SD = 0.39
	N = 896	N = 841	N = 863	N = 1,066	N = 787	N = 1,048	N = 1,701	N = 1,473
Percent of discussants who are co-workers	15%	23%	15%	16%	20%	16%	10%	10%
	SD = 0.27	SD = 0.23	SD = 0.28	SD = 0.27	SD = 0.40	SD = 0.28	SD = 0.22	SD = 0.23
	N = 898	N = 842	N = 864	N = 977	N = 788	N = 955	N = 1,701	N = 1,473
Percent of discussants who are "close" friends	73%	66%	74%	92%	84%	92%	81%	81%
	SD = 0.29	SD = 0.31	SD = 0.29	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.37	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.29	SD = 0.29
	N = 698	N = 702	N = 659	N = 1,060	N = 765	N = 1,043	N = 1,651	N = 1,427

[a]Average number of named discussants across all respondents, including those who volunteered no names.

was unique, however, in that it was not conducted adjacent to any major election. The decrease in named political discussants outside of a campaign season is in line with Bearman and Parigi's (2004) finding that some respondents who fail to name social network members have potential discussants available, but claim to have nothing to talk about (also see Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004). Even outside of a campaign season, however, political discussion is still quite frequent within core networks: respondents discussed politics with 79 percent of their core social network, and 72 percent of respondents discussed politics with every member of their core networks.[6] What is important to note from the differences across surveys is that it is the larger political environment—not the network stimulus in the survey questionnaire—that seems responsible for affecting levels of political discussion.

AMOUNT OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION

While the vast majority of Americans discuss politics with the same people who they discuss important matters with, it could be the case that political discussions in core networks take place with specialized political discussion partners who have unique characteristics. However, our data suggest that political discussion takes place frequently among the entire core network. Among respondents in the ISL, there is more political talk occurring with political discussion partners compared to the average "important matters" discussant ($t = 7.24$, $p < .01$), though the substantive value of this difference is quite marginal (also see Huckfeldt and Mendez 2008, table 1). Moreover, this comparison is potentially misleading because respondents presented with the "political matters" stimulus might be prompted to overreport political discussion, especially during a campaign season (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004). However, when we restrict our analysis of ILS data to only the talk politics subnetwork of the "important matters" network, the average amount of political discussion occurring in the "important matters" network is comparable to the average amount occurring in the political discussion network ($t = 1.15$, $p = .25$). This implies that the political characteristics of the important matters networks overlap significantly with those of the political matters networks, especially when we focus on people in the important matters networks with whom people discuss politics. Stated differently, during an election season it seems that politics is a general topic of discussion in people's core networks, and that asking about political matters networks will simply elicit the same information (also see Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004).

The CNES-US data offer similar findings. The average amount of political discussion occurring in the talk politics subnetwork is slightly less than the

6. Further analysis supports the claim that the drop-in political subnetwork size in the 1987 GSS is due to a decrease in reported political discussion outside of campaign season among those with low interest.

amount of political discussion that occurs with fifth peer political discussants ($t = 5.72$, $p < .01$). This difference is statistically significant, but the order of magnitude is equivalent to only 1 out of every 10 respondents reporting less political discussion with just one of their, on average, three network partners. Additionally, the level of discussion that occurs in the talk politics subnetwork is closer to the level of discussion that occurs with the fifth political discussant ($t = 2.48$, $p = 0.01$). Otherwise stated, the fifth peer "political matters" generator does not lead the vast majority of respondents to name someone who is a specialized political discussant. Only a very small portion of respondents report more frequent political discussion with their fifth "political matters" peer compared to the average member of their core network.

INTIMACY OF SOCIAL TIES

Most people discuss politics as often with their core networks of family and friends as with the people they name in response to the "political matters" stimulus. Findings presented in the bottom portion of table 2 suggest that this is because most respondents provide similar names in response to the two name generators. In all three studies, around half of all named discussants are spouses or family members, regardless of the name generator used, while between 10 and 20 percent are co-workers.[7] Otherwise stated, core discussion and political discussion networks are drawn from similar realms of life.

A closer look at the data summarized in table 2 provides some evidence that during an election cycle, political discussion networks could include people with slightly less intimate social ties with the respondent. For example, in the ISL data set, spouses made up 13 percent of the "political matters" discussion network compared to 16 percent of the "important matters" network ($t = 2.45$, $p = .01$). Political discussion partners were also less likely to be family members ($t = 3.20$, $p < .01$) and more likely to be co-workers ($t = 6.63$, $p < .01$) compared to members of the core social network. Political discussion partners are also less likely to be considered a "close" friend ($t = 4.36$, $p < .01$).

However, the evidence is considerably more mixed when we compare the CNES fifth political discussant to the average member of the "important matters" network. The data in table 2 suggest that the fifth political discussant is less socially intimate compared to the average member of the core discussion network (with the exception of spouses; $t = 1.82$, $p = .07$). However, the analysis for table 2 only looked for significant differences between the core networks and the fifth discussant for those respondents who were willing to name a fifth discussant.[8] These results do not account for the possibility that people who name fifth peers are systematically different than those who do not.

7. The percentage of intimate ties is marginally lower in the city study (ISL) compared to the national studies (GSS and CNES-US), as is often the case of the personal networks of city dwellers (Fischer 1982).

8. Sixty percent of all respondents named a fifth discussant ($N = 788$ out of 1,318).

Having done this, by restricting our analysis to only those respondents who named a fifth political discussant, we find that the fifth political discussant is equally likely to be a spouse ($t = 1.14$, $p = .25$) or a family member ($t = 1.34$, $p = .18$), and only marginally more likely to be a co-worker ($t = 1.92$, $p = .05$) compared to the other members of the respondent's core network. Overall, 1 in 10 respondents name a fifth peer who is not as close as the average member of their core network, although 84 percent of fifth peers are still considered to be close friends.

In addition, not all respondents in the CNES study named a less intimate tie in response to the query to name a fifth person with whom they specifically discuss politics. Of the almost 20 percent of people who name a fifth peer but were unable to name anyone in response to the important matters generator, 55 percent provide their spouses' name as their primary political discussant. Even among people who were able to provide one or more names in response to the "important matters" generator, 18 percent name their spouse as their primary political discussion partner.

The claim that political discussants are drawn from less intimate social ties is cast further into doubt when we look at with whom, among members of the core "important matters" discussion network, a respondent is most likely to discuss politics. Because the wording of the political matters generator asks respondents to focus on political discussion, they may not be primed to consider the sorts of more intimate discussions that would lead to a report of a discussant as a close friend. Therefore, the subnetwork comparison takes on particular importance as a validity check on the claim that political discussants are less intimate. In the ISL data set we find that the talk politics subnetwork is more socially intimate compared to the political discussion network. In the CNES data set, the subnetwork is more socially intimate than the fifth political discussant. Finally, in the GSS data set, the talk politics subnetwork appears to be as socially intimate, if not more so, than the core important matters discussion network.

POLITICAL EXPERTISE AND AGREEMENT

The vast majority of Americans talk about politics with the same types of people whom they discuss other matters with: close friends and family members. However, it is possible that among their friends and family members, many respondents seek out particular types of individuals as political discussants: opinion leaders who are politically knowledgeable (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944) or those who share similar political values (e.g., Finifter 1974). Therefore, it is important to consider the political expertise and leanings of the individuals within both discussion networks.

Looking first at the respondent's characterization of how politically knowledgeable his or her discussion partners are in the ISL data set, in the top row of Table 3 we see that during the election season, political discussion

Table 3. Social Network Political Expertise and Agreement

	ISL			CNES-US			GSS	
	Core/"Important matters"	"Discuss politics"	Talk politics subnetwork	Core/"Important matters"	5th Political discussant	Talk politics subnetwork	Core/"Important matters"	Talk politics subnetwork
Political expertise								
Political knowledge[a]	0.60	0.62	0.62	0.60	0.63	0.61	N/A	N/A
	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.21	SD = 0.29	SD = 0.21		
	$N = 892$	$N = 840$	$N = 862$	$N = 1{,}063$	$N = 786$	$N = 1{,}047$		
Average years of education	14.58	14.67	14.61	13.71	13.65	13.71	N/A	N/A
	SD = 2.14	SD = 2.12	SD = 2.16	SD = 1.97	SD = 2.45	SD = 1.99		
	$N = 834$	$N = 782$	$N = 794$	$N = 975$	$N = 598$	$N = 951$		
Political agreement								
Candidate preferences[b]	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.45	0.46	0.46	N/A	N/A
	SD = 0.44	SD = 0.43	SD = 0.44	SD = 0.42	SD = 0.50	SD = 0.43		
	$N = 771$	$N = 765$	$N = 750$	$N = 975$	$N = 622$	$N = 956$		
Partisan preferences[c]	−0.09	−0.11	−0.08	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.27	0.28
	SD = 0.64	SD = 0.64	SD = 0.64				SD = 0.76	SD = 0.78
	$N = 856$	$N = 821$	$N = 834$				$N = 1{,}479$	$N = 1{,}326$
Political disagreement[d]	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.53	0.52	N/A	N/A
	SD = 0.20	SD = 0.20	SD = 0.20	SD = 0.20	SD = 0.27	SD = 0.20		
	$N = 860$	$N = 837$	$N = 860$	$N = 1{,}048$	$N = 773$	$N = 1{,}048$		
Electoral disagreement	0.18	0.21	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.23	N/A	N/A
	SD = 0.30	SD = 0.31	SD = 0.30	SD = 0.32	SD = 0.41	SD = 0.32		
	$N = 307$	$N = 319$	$N = 987$	$N = 674$	$N = 450$	$N = 666$		
Partisan disagreement	0.25	0.27	0.25	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.66	0.66
	SD = 0.33	SD = 0.36	SD = 0.33				SD = 0.52	SD = 0.52
	$N = 771$	$N = 770$	$N = 754$				$N = 1{,}453$	$N = 1{,}322$

[a]Political knowledge is standardized to a 0–1 scale.
[b]Percentage of discussants perceived as preferring Republican candidates, third parties excluded.
[c]Average partisanship of discussants on a three-point scale (−1 = Republican, 0 = Independent, 1 = Democrat); third parties put at midpoint.
[d]Political disagreement is self-reported by respondents.

partners are seen as only slightly more knowledgeable than the people with whom they discuss "important matters" ($t = 1.98$, $p = .05$) (also see Huckfeldt and Mendez 2008, table 1). In the CNES, the fifth political discussant also retains a slight edge in reported knowledge over the core discussion network members ($t = 2.58$, $p = .01$). However, while statistically significant, the differences in both data sets are substantively small. Moreover, in the ISL data, there is no difference in political knowledge between the talk politics subnetwork and the "political matters" discussion network, and in the CNES data set there is no distinct difference between the talk politics subnetwork and the fifth political discussant ($t = 1.71$, $p = .09$).

Since education is highly correlated with political knowledge and engagement (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), it is another useful proxy for discussant political expertise. In the ISL, there is no significant education difference between the political discussion partner and the average member of the "important matters" discussion group ($t = 0.85$, $p = .40$). There is also no difference in education in the CNES data set between the core discussion network and the fifth political discussant ($t = 0.53$, $p = .59$). These data show that people do not just pick a "smart" person to discuss politics with. Instead, we engage in broad-ranging political discussion without specifically seeking out knowledge or expertise in choosing the members of our network.

Most people do not seek out political expertise when choosing their discussion partners. But, do people actively seek out like-minded political discussants in order to avoid political disagreement? The striking level of agreement of social network partners has been noted in prior research (e.g., Mutz and Martin 2001). We find that while political discussion networks are characterized by significant political homophily, the same is also true of core discussion networks. In other words, while people experience plenty of political agreement, it does not seem to be a function of them selecting political partners who agree with them. There are three possible measures of political agreement in the ISL (self-reported disagreement, vote choice, and partisan disagreement), two in the CNES (self-reported disagreement and vote choice) and one in the 1987 GSS (partisan disagreement).[9] Across these measures, there is no single instance of political discussion partners agreeing more often with the respondents than core network members (also see Huckfeldt and Mendez 2008, table 1).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have directly compared two methods of generating survey data on social networks. One method asks respondents to provide information

9. Electoral disagreement was difficult to code in 1992 because Perot was the choice of many respondents, but was rarely named as a choice by discussants. The strategy of omitting third-party supporters was applied in other years, but results in a severe loss of cases in 1992. A variety of coding strategies were used to address this problem, and none suggested that there was a difference in political agreement between political discussion partners and core network members.

about the individuals with whom they discuss "important matters," while the other asks respondents to provide information about the individuals with whom they discuss politics. We find that respondents provide more or less the same data on their political discussion partners regardless of which name generator procedure is used.

These results have both methodological and substantive implications for students of social influence, political behavior, and public opinion. On the methodological side, our findings suggest that different approaches to collecting data on social networks do not lead to wildly different results. Whether we ask the public to tell us about the people with whom they discuss "important matters" or politics, the information solicited is nearly identical as long as the survey is conducted during an election season. As such, our findings do not necessarily support using one name generator procedure over the other. That said, we did find evidence that during elections, political discussion extends beyond the core network to include additional, and perhaps less intimate, social ties. Furthermore, prior research has found that survey respondents underreport political conversation when compared to direct researcher observations (Walsh 2004). As such, in order to capture the whole range of political discussants, especially if the study is being conducted during an election, surveys may need to inquire about network members using a variety of stimuli. Therefore, our recommended measurement strategy is to solicit network members using multiple prompts, perhaps by adopting a variant of the CNES approach of asking first for core network members and then probing for additional political discussion partners using more specific stimuli (for another example, see Fischer 1982).

Our findings also address two unresolved substantive debates that center on how individuals construct their political discussion networks. The first pertains to network homogeneity. The same high level of political agreement within social networks we find in our data has been well documented in other studies (e.g., Mutz and Martin 2001). However, subject to debate is the cause of this homogeneity. Many studies of social networks assume that political discussants are consciously selected by individuals in order to minimize interpersonal conflicts (Festinger 1957; Ulbig and Funk 1999; Mutz 2002). Otherwise stated, political networks are thought to be homogeneous because most individuals consciously choose to insulate themselves from new information that conflicts with their own points of view (Finifter 1974). Our findings cast doubt on this interpretation. Overall, the results of our study suggest that most Americans discuss politics with the same people with whom they discuss other everyday topics (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2002; Walsh 2004; McClurg 2006). We do not treat politics as a realm that requires specialized expertise or opinions for which we must construct unique social networks. As such, preference clustering within social networks is not a product of conscious selection of politically agreeable discussants, but rather an unintended consequence of choosing to discuss politics with the members of our core social networks.

Second, the fact that we discuss politics with the same individuals we discuss other topics with also addresses objections to the claim that people can be influenced by the individuals around them. Advocates of sociological theories claim that social networks can have a causal influence on an individual's behaviors and attitudes. Critics counter that such associations are spurious (e.g., Laver 2005). This argument is often based on the assumption that individuals' personal characteristics drive both their behaviors and attitudes, and their selection of discussants. For example, an individual's interest in politics might cause him or her to both participate in politics and to select specific types of individuals who enjoy discussing politics. However, the results presented in this paper suggest that we do not consciously select our political discussants. This is necessary, although not sufficient, evidence that social networks can have a causal influence on an individual's opinions and patterns of behavior. This conclusion is also in keeping with recent research by Klofstad (2007) and Nickerson (2008), who provide strong evidence that networks cause political behavior by using experimental designs that rule out methodological biases caused by self-selection into social networks.

In conclusion, we note that further study is needed in order to better understand how the American public discusses and learns about politics during the course of regular social interaction. First, while our data show that core and political discussion networks comprise the same individuals, we do not know whether the significance of any single member of the network varies based on the topic under discussion (Huckfeldt et al. 1998). For example, a person might turn to his or her spouse first and a co-worker second for advice on household finances, but to a co-worker first and the spouse second for information on politics.[10] Second, additional research is needed in order to understand how respondents interpret survey questions about their social networks. For example, the similarity in data provided by the "important matters" and "political matters" name generator procedures could be caused by respondents thinking about politics when they hear the words "important matters" (e.g., Bearman and Parigi 2004). This possibility is made more likely by the fact that each of the surveys examined in the paper were on political subjects. In future surveys, respondents could be asked directly what they were thinking about when they were asked about "important matters." Question ordering and the content of questions that appear before the social network battery could also be manipulated. For example, nonpolitical questions could be included before the network battery in order to see whether the data provided by the respondent change when the context of the questionnaire is not political.

Our results also lead to additional substantive questions that can be addressed in future studies. Foremost in our minds is the question of what factors structure

10. Huckfeldt et al. (1998) show evidence of this type of phenomenon in an analysis of response latency using the ILS data set. However, this subtle difference between the "important matters" and "political matters" discussion networks dissipates as the campaign season progresses.

the size and composition of social networks. If networks are not built explicitly for political purposes, then what factors affect their construction and what implications does that hold for political behavior? We are also concerned with the factors that determine political interaction within networks. Though average Americans may not build politically expert networks, that does not mean that exposure to political information within those networks is independent of individual characteristics and environmental stimuli.

Appendix: Survey Questions

TOTAL NUMBER OF DISCUSSANTS NAMED

ISL: "Now let's shift our attention to another area. From time to time, people discuss [important matters/government, elections and politics with other people][11] with other people. Looking back over the last few months, I'd like to know the people you talked with about matters that are important to you. These people might or might not be relatives. Can you think of anyone?"

CNES-US: "Now let's shift our attention to another area. From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months, I'd like to know the people you talked with about matters that are important to you. Can you think of anyone?"

GSS: "From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months, who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to you? Just tell me their first names or initials."

AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION

ISL, CNES-US: "When you talk with [discussant's name], do you discuss political matters: often, sometimes, rarely, or never?"

GSS: "About how often do you talk to [discussant's name] about political matters: almost daily, at least weekly, at least monthly, at least yearly, less than yearly, or never?"

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONDENT AND DISCUSSANT

ISL, CNES-US: "Is [discussant's name] a: spouse or partner, other relative, or unrelated by blood or marriage?" "Is [discussant's name] a co-worker: yes or no?"

11. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of two versions of this question: political matters or important matters.

GSS: "Here is a list of some of the ways in which people are connected to each other. Some people can be connected to you in more than one way. For example, a man could be your brother and he may belong to your church and be your lawyer. When I read you a name, please tell me all the ways that person is connected to you."

LEVEL OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN RESPONDENT AND DISCUSSANT

ISL: "Would you say [discussant's name] is a close friend, a friend, or just someone that you regularly come into contact with?"

CNES-US: "Is [discussant's name] a friend of yours: yes or no?" "Would you say [discussant's name] is a close friend: yes or no?"

GSS: "Which of these people do you feel especially close to?"

DISCUSSANT POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

ISL, CNES-US: "Generally speaking, how much do you think [discussant's name] knows about politics? Would you say: a great deal, an average amount, or not much at all?"

DISCUSSANT EDUCATION

ISL: "What is the highest level of education [discussant's name] has completed? Is it: less than high school, a high school diploma, some college, a college degree, or more than a college degree?"

CNES-US: "What is the highest level of education [discussant's name] has completed? Is it: less than high school, a high school diploma, or a college degree?"

DISCUSSANT CANDIDATE PREFERENCE

ISL: "I have another question about the [person/people] you have named. National public opinion polls show that President Clinton's popularity has been [increasing/decreasing] recently.[12] As things currently stand, how do you think [discussant's name] will vote in the 1996 presidential election? Do you think [discussant's name] will vote for the Democratic candidate, the Republican candidate, an independent candidate, or do you think [he/she] probably won't vote?"

12. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of three versions of this question: support for Clinton increasing, decreasing, or no reference to Clinton's popularity.

CNES-US: "Which candidate do you think [discussant's name] supported in the presidential election this year: Bush, Clinton, Perot, other (specify), Bush and Clinton, Bush and Perot, Clinton and Perot, or none of the above?"

ELECTORAL DISAGREEMENT

Electoral disagreement is based on a comparison of *Discussant candidate preference* to the following measures of the respondent's candidate choice.

ISL: "Did you vote for George Bush, Bill Clinton, or Ross Perot?"

CNES-US: "Would you please tell me which candidate you voted for in the presidential election?"

DISCUSSANT PARTISAN PREFERENCE

ISL: "Do you think [discussant's name] normally supports political candidates who are: Republicans, Democrats, both, or neither?"

PARTISAN DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN DISCUSSANT AND RESPONDENT

Partisan disagreement is based on a comparison of *Discussant partisan preference* to the following measures of the respondent's partisan preference.

ISL: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" "Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat/Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat/Republican]?" Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or closer to the Democratic Party?"

POLITICAL DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN DISCUSSANT AND RESPONDENT

ISL, CNES-US: "When you discuss politics with [discussant's name], do you disagree: often, sometimes, rarely, or never?"

References

Bearman, Peter S., and Paolo Parigi. 2004. "Cloning Headless Frogs and Other Important Matters: Conversation Topics and Network Structure." *Social Forces* 83:535–57.

Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1975. "Parents as 'Middlepersons' in Political Socialization." *The Journal of Politics* 37:83–107.

Beck, Paul, Russell J. Dalton, and Robert Huckfeldt. 1995. Cross-National Election Studies: United States Study, 1992 [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Columbus: Ohio State University/Irvine:

University of California/Bloomington: Indiana University [producers], 1993. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1995.

Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, Thad A. 1981. "On Contextual Change and Partisan Attributes." *British Journal of Political Science* 11:427–47.

Burt, Ronald S. 1984. "Network Items and the General Social Survey." *Social Networks* 6:293–339.

Burt, Ronald S. 1985. "General Social Survey Network Items." *Connections* 8:119–23.

Campbell, David E., and Christina Wolbrecht. 2006. "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents." *Journal of Politics* 68:233–47.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.

Davis, James A., Tom W. Smith, and Peter V. Marsden. 2005. General Social Surveys, 1972–2004 [CUMULATIVE FILE] [Computer file]. ICPSR04295-v2. Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center [producer], 2005. Storrs, CT: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 2006.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Festinger, L. 1957. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Finifter, A. 1974. "The Friendship Group as a Protective Environment for Political Deviants." *American Political Science Review* 68:607–25.

Fischer, Claude S. 1982. *To Dwell among Friends*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Huckfeldt, Robert. 1986. *Politics in Context: Assimilation and Conflict in Urban Neighborhoods*. New York: Agathon Press.

Huckfeldt, Robert. 2001. "The Social Communication of Political Expertise." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:425–39.

Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, and Jeffrey Levine. 1995. "Political Environments, Cohesive Social Groups, and the Communication of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 39:1025–54.

Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul E. Johnson, and John Sprague. 2004. *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions within Communication Networks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Huckfeldt, Robert, Jeffrey Levine, William Morgan, and John Sprague. 1998. "Election Campaigns, Social Communication, and the Accessibility of Perceived Discussant Preference." *Political Behavior* 20:263–94.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and Jeanette Morehouse Mendez. 2008. "Moths, Flames, and Political Engagement: Managing Disagreement within Communication Networks." *Journal of Politics* 70:83–96.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1985. Presidential Election Campaign Study, 1984 [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Bloomington: Center for Survey Research, Indiana University [producer], 1985. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1995.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1985. Presidential Election Campaign Study, 1984: [South Bend, Indiana] [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Indiana University, Center for Survey Research [producer], 1985. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor].

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1991. "Discussant Effects on Vote Choice: Intimacy, Structure, and Interdependence." *Journal of Politics* 53:122–58.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 2000. Indianapolis–St. Louis Election Study, 1996–1997 [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Bloomington: Indiana University Center for Survey Research [producer]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter University Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor].

Jennings, Kent M., and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *The American Political Science Review* 62:169–84.

Katz, Elihu, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. 1955. *Personal Influence*. New York: Free Press.

Kenny, Christopher. 1992. "Political Participation and Effects for the Social Environment." *American Journal of Political Science* 36:259–67.

Kenny, Christopher. 1994. "The Microenvironment of Attitude Change." *The Journal of Politics* 56:715–28.

King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior from Aggregate Data*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Klofstad, Casey A. 2007. "Talk Leads to Recruitment: How Discussions about Politics and Current Events Increase Civic Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 60:180–91.

Lake, R. L., and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation." *Political Psychology* 19:567–83.

Laumann, Edward O. 1973. *Bonds of Pluralism: The Form and Substance of Urban Social Networks*. New York: Wiley.

Laver, Michael. 2005. "Book Review of *The Social Logic of Politics*." *Perspectives on Politics* 3:933–4.

Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet. 1944. *The People's Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press.

MacKuen, Michael. 1990. "Speaking of Politics: Individual Conversational Choice, Public Opinion, and the Prospects for Deliberative Democracy." In *Information and Democratic Processes*, eds. John Ferejohn and James Kuklinski. Champaign–Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Marsden, Peter V. 1987. "Core Discussion Networks of Americans." *American Sociological Review* 52:122–31.

McCallister, Lynne, and Claude S. Fischer. 1978. "A Procedure for Surveying Personal Networks." *Sociological Methods and Research* 7:131–48

McClurg, Scott D. 2003. "Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 56:449–64.

McClurg, Scott D. 2004. "Indirect Mobilization: The Social Consequences of Party Contacts in an Election Campaign." *American Politics Research* 32:406–43.

McClurg, Scott D. 2006. "The Electoral Relevance of Political Talk: Examining Disagreement and Expertise Effects in Social Networks on Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 50:737–54.

Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 46:838–55.

Mutz, Diana C., and Paul S. Martin. 2001. "Facilitating Communication Across Lines of Political Difference." *American Political Science Review* 95:71–114.

Nickerson, David. 2008. "Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 102:49–57.

Putnam, Robert D. 1966. "Political Attitudes and the Local Community." *American Political Science Review* 60:640–54.

Ulbig, Stacy G., and Carolyn L. Funk. 1999. "Conflict Avoidance and Political Participation." *Political Behavior* 21:265–82.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walsh, Katherine Kramer. 2004. *Talking about Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wright, Gerald C., Jr. 1977. "Contextual Models of Electoral Behavior: The Southern Wallace Vote." *American Political Science Review* 71:497–508.