

**TOCQUEVILLE'S TWO FORMS OF ASSOCIATION:  
INTERPRETING TOCQUEVILLE AND DEBATES  
OVER CIVIL SOCIETY TODAY**

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The theoretical importance of Tocqueville's writing about America can be summed up this phrase: Democracy depends on many things besides voting. In this way, he turned Aristotle's merely political definition on its head, and provided a conceptual translation of what democratic activists, and republican political theorists, had long understood. It is a lesson, I believe, to which many contemporary democratic activists and neo-conservative republican thinkers should return today.

While there are, of course, a range of non-voting factors that Tocqueville examines, the most influential has been his emphasis on associations. Debates about associations were already central to ideological and constitutional conflicts inside democratic America by the time Tocqueville wrote, indeed before his birth date in 1805 that we celebrate today. Philosophical and empirical disputes about the relation between democracy and association have continued to be central in the centuries since he published *Democracy and America* thirty years later. The debates gradually came to be centrally informed by interpretations of Tocqueville's own thought. This theoretical centrality is clearly demonstrated in the recent revival of discussions about civil society. Tocqueville's writings have been regarded as central to the idea of civil society. There is even a "neo-Tocquevillian" school of civil society theory.

In the essay that follows, I will address the relationship between civil society and association via an interpretation of Tocqueville's ideas, and via an interpretation of other interpretations with which I disagree. I begin with a general statement about of my own perspective.

#### CIVIL ASSOCIATION, DEMOCRACY, AND "COMMUNICATIVE INTENT"

In response to long-term shifts in social structure and short-term alterations in social circumstances, issue-oriented associations form to affect public opinion and its representatives in the civil sphere. These can be long-established lobbying groups that represent private economic or political interests, such as trade associations or the public arm of trade unions. They can be groups more explicitly oriented to public goods, such as environmental and taxpayer lobbies, or city manager associations. They can be large, relatively bureaucratized associations representing broad categories of persons, such as the National Organization of Women (NOW), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), or the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP). They can be much more intimate associations that form in response to a local "issue" -- an off-shore oil spill, a threatening toxic waste dump, the poisoning of an underground water reserve. They can be middling organizations that, while large in scale, have arisen in more time sensitive ways, for example, "University Professors Against the Vietnam War," "Public Citizens Against the NAFTA treaty," or "Citizens for The Impeachment of the President."

What these groups have in common is that they have stepped outside the structured roles of noncivil institutions -- outside of economic organizations, families, churches, and local communities -- to press their arguments in the "court of public opinion." What defines such associations, in other words, is their communicative intent. One could say, on the one hand, that they have gone beyond purely functional interests in accomplishing a particular task to broader, civil concerns; one could equally say that they have decided that, in order to accomplish some particular interest, they have found it necessary to address civil concerns.<sup>1</sup> In making their case for the functional interests they represent, these associations feel compelled to make an appeal to the entire civil community or to those mandated

to represent it. In launching these appeals, they will employ whatever clout they can muster, whether financial, political, religious, familial, or ethnic resources. But these resources can be effective only insofar as they allow the group more persuasively to justify its particular interests in universalizing terms.

Issue-oriented associations can make this case only in terms of the binary discourse of civil society. In doing so, they crystallize this broad and general set of ideals about self and others vis-à-vis particular situations, particular conflicts, and particular groups. These associations translate the codes of civil society into specific claims for, and against, the expansion of rights, the execution of new government policies, and the undertaking of new social actions. They may do so by creating conflict and intensifying opposition, or by trying to create greater cooperation and political or social harmony. They may translate and specify these general codes by impugning the motives of the individuals and groups who oppose their claims; the relations that these claims would putatively establish; or the kinds of institutions that would supposedly result. They may also do so by idealizing, even apotheosizing, the motives, relations, and institutions that they claim to be associated with the policies, actions, and rights of their own group.

In the early 1990s, when the Clinton administration proposed a sweeping reorganization of the nation's largely private, and increasingly expensive, health care delivery system, the hundreds and thousands of private insurance companies, hospitals, and doctors' associations set out to defeat this Democratic President and his wife, Hilary, whose task force had proposed the reforms. They could not oppose these reforms, however, by utilizing their resources directly, by controlling the state or by blocking reorganization in the medical profession or the health-delivery spheres. Making creative use of their existing lobbying associations, and inventing highly effective new ones, they entered the civil sphere and engaged in communicative action. If they had simply presented public opinion with the importance of their particular interests, however, they would have generated little solidarity. Instead, they created what proved to be a highly persuasive public relations campaign. Without support from wider public opinion, their particular, functional interests might have been viewed unfavorably by the journalists who articulate cognitive frames for interpreting the health reforms, by the polls presenting the

public's shifting opinions, and by the civil officers who acted in the public's name. They would have gained little influence, in other words, if they had simply complained that the Clinton reforms would undermine their organizational authority or reduce their incomes. Instead, these civil associations intertwined their interests with the discourse of civil society. They did so by polluting the Clinton reforms, arguing that the newly proposed health system would be anti-democratic; that it would take control of health decisions away from the individual; that it reflected an authoritarian distrust for common sense and rationality; that its proposed regulations were confusing and opaque.

After the health care measures were defeated, however, the American health care system still was compelled to undergo drastic change. The difference was that these changes were organized by the private economic sphere alone instead of being subject, as well, to the control of civil authority. For-profit Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) organized increasingly vast sectors of the American health care system, introducing cost-cutting measures without the scrutiny of civil society. When consumers of this reduced yet more expensive care began to feel the strain, local groups formed to protest particular HMO practices, and, eventually, nation-wide consumer lobbies arose, demanding regulation and reform. To do so, they had to enter communicatively into the civil sphere. To gain solidarity with American citizens who did not share their particular concerns, they had to frame the medical and economic interests of their members in the democratic language of civil society. The groups lobbying for HMO reform packaged their reforms as a "patient's bill of rights." They complained to politicians and reporters that HMO's were hierarchical and repressive in the face of reasonable demands for medical treatment; that they were greedy and self-centered; that they were secretive in responding to patients' requests for procedural information, and deceitful in their accounting practices and public representations.<sup>2</sup>

Oscillating in this manner between particular interests and cultural coding, civil associations scan public opinion, index the symbolic constructions of the civil sphere established by cognitive and expressive media, and gauge the choices and intensities of the public's opinions as measured by polls. They are, in other words, inextricably interconnected with the other communicative institutions of the civil

sphere and the phenomenological lifeworld of intuitive civil sensibility – the structures of civil feeling -- that supports them.

“VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS” IN LIBERAL THOUGHT

By naming these kinds of groups civil associations, I am differentiating them from the much more general, and, I would suggest, much less useful, category of “voluntary associations,” which has played such a pronounced role in democratic theory and empirical debate. According to the liberal understanding of “civil society,” which continues to inform much of the traditional approach today, democratic thinkers link civil society to virtually every association outside of the authoritarian state. The result is that associations are defined as voluntary insofar as they were not state-directed. They are voluntary, that is, in the sense that citizens were free to form them, and members free to join them or leave them, without the threat of political coercion.

In the first volume of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville seemed to make a great deal of such formations, praising the new American democracy for the fact that its citizens took matters into their own hands by forming associations rather than simply waiting upon the beneficence of a paternalistic state. But Tocqueville was hardly alone. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, and particularly in his preface to its second edition, Emile Durkheim heralded the significance of what he called secondary associations for providing mediations between the impersonal bureaucratic state and the individual.<sup>3</sup> Such face-to-face groupings were also praised by such republican thinkers as Hannah Arendt, who idealized the local and spontaneous political associations of direct democracy, and by Jürgen Habermas, who enthusiastically evoked the intimacy and conversation of eighteenth-century coffee houses and salons.<sup>4</sup>

This broad and inclusive approach to voluntary association crystallized in American social scientific thinking about democracy that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the evolutionary and idealizing strand developed by such sociological thinkers as Talcott Parsons and Seymour Martin Lipset, and such historians as Louis Hartz, and such political thinkers as Robert Dahl.<sup>5</sup> Against the conservative and radical theories that posited the inevitability of mass society and elite domination<sup>6</sup> and against the big state theories that romanticized state Communism and its totalitarian

control, such liberals championed the intermediate level of voluntary associations. These were conceptualized very broadly, simply as “voluntary,” in the sense of not subject to direct control, either from the state or from other powerful social hierarchies. In *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, for example, a leading anthropologist defined voluntary associations as a “group organized for a pursuit of one interest or of several interests in common,” which could be “contrasted with involuntary groupings serving a greater variety of ends, such as kin groups, castes, social classes, and communities.”<sup>7</sup> In the same set of volumes, in an equally broad fashion, the best-known sociological student of this organizational form stressed simply that a group “is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth” and, in addition, “exists independently of the state.”<sup>8</sup>

MISINTERPRETING TOCQUEVILLE’S MANDATE:  
ARE CIVIL ASSOCIATIONS THE SAME AS “VOLUNTARY GROUPS”?

In recent decades, this traditional liberal approach to voluntary association has formed the heart of the so-called “neo-Tocquevillian” theory of civil society developed by the American political scientist Robert Putnam, a perspective that, in the United States at least, has created strong echoes in both intellectual circles and the popular press. From his sweeping empirical study of democratic and authoritarian tendencies in Italy<sup>9</sup>, to his attacks on television viewing and his pithy observations about the dangers of bowling alone,<sup>10</sup> Putnam has vigorously argued that such organizations as the Boy Scouts, church support groups, women’s clubs, the PTA, and bowling leagues are the key to a lively civil sphere and thus to democracy itself.

The problem with such theorizing, no matter how well-intended and civic-minded, is that, along with the liberal approach to civil society more generally, it seems just slightly out of date. Developed to address the possibilities of democracy in earlier and much simpler societies, it suffers from the diffuseness that makes it congenitally unsuited to providing a critical approach to democracy in the present day. Of course, pluralism and diversity remain vital for complex societies, and the legal freedom to form and un-form associations essential. But the neo-Tocquevillian approach paints with a brush that

is much too broad to delineate the requisites for contemporary civil society.

To include every possible kind of non-state grouping under the umbrella of voluntary association, to say, in effect, that every such nonstate grouping teaches the art of civil association, is to say little about the variable relation between association and expansive solidarity. Cooking societies, shooting associations, dog training, stargazing, and hunting clubs permeate democratic and nondemocratic nations alike. So do organizations like the Boy Scouts, which not only have nothing intrinsically democratic about them but, rather, teach values and model social relationships that are anticivil in some fundamental ways. While revolutionary secret societies, such as the Weathermen of the late sixties or the American militia of the nineties, are much more political in their activities, they do not seek to achieve power by entering communicatively into the civil sphere; they wish, instead, to use force to overthrow it. In other words, *it is not the mere fact of associating that defines a grouping as civil, but what is associated with it*, and whether or not these other factors orient an association to engage with the broader solidarities that exists outside itself. As Jean Cohen remarked in her criticism of such neo-Tocquevillian theory, the question is “what generalizes the social trust” that exists “within voluntary organizations”? How does the trust that sustains a particular association “become trust of strangers outside the group?”<sup>11</sup> Of course, this is a normative rather than an empirical formulation. In empirical terms, the generalizing of trust beyond the confines of any particular organization may actually be done in manner that increases feelings of strangeness and antagonism between broader settings and large groups. But Cohen’s critical point remains well taken. It is not the existence of a group per se, even if the associating it spawns is enthusiastic and face-to-face. It is whether or not the group is oriented to issues outside of itself, and whether in relation to these it displays a communicative intent.

#### WHAT DID TOCQUEVILLE REALLY SAY?

If we revisit Tocqueville, whose writings are so fundamental to the current revival of voluntary association theory, we find that he was much more attuned to these subtleties than the contemporary school that bears his name. Tocqueville did indeed laud Americans for “forever forming associations,” as Putnam reminds us, but he showed

much more sensitivity than his contemporary American interlocutors to the fact that such associations could promote not only civil but anticivil solidarities. Tocqueville did not actually praise Americans for frenetically forming non-state groups. He called attention, instead, to their “perfection” in “the art of pursuing in common the objects of common desires”<sup>12</sup>. It was, in other words, an orientation to wider civil solidarity, not the act of associating per se, that Tocqueville wished to underscore.

This interpretive distinction may seem subtle, but it is vital to an understanding of the variable relationship between association and democracy. It is instructive to scrutinize Tocqueville’s formal definition of associations, for it consists of two parts, neither of which contemporary neo-Tocquevillians emphasize. An association, Tocqueville writes, “consists solely in the decision of a certain number of individuals to adhere publicly to certain doctrines,” on the one hand, and in the engagement “to commit themselves to seek the triumph of those doctrines in a certain manner,” on the other.<sup>13</sup> By “adhere publicly,” Tocqueville refers to the fact that to be part of the civil sphere, associations must have a civil orientation, what I have been calling here a communicative interest in influencing public opinion. By qualifying this definition still further, by emphasizing that these publicly-oriented associations must spread their doctrines only in a “certain manner,” Tocqueville drew attention to the binary possibilities of communicative action. Civil associations can articulate their interests in both civil and anticivil terms.

It was perhaps in order to demonstrate these ambiguous possibilities that Tocqueville undertook to demonstrate that, in his times, voluntary associations actually occurred just as frequently in nondemocratic as in democratic societies. By doing so, he stresses that the effects of association are not decided only by whether association takes a communicative, public-oriented form, but by whether, and to what degree, they seek to expand or contract social solidarity. It would come as a surprise to his contemporary interpreters to learn that Tocqueville did not, in fact, argue that civil associations were more prominent in democratic America than in nondemocratic Europe. He demonstrated, rather, that in Europe associations were more particularistic and divisive, tending to short-circuit public discussion in order to engage in more direct exercises in power. European associations, Tocqueville claimed, treated members



of other groups, not as potential partners in a wider solidarity, but as enemies.

Most Europeans still look upon association as a weapon of war, to be organized in haste and immediately tried out on some field of battle. People do indeed associate for the purpose of discussion, but the thought of impending action weighs on everyone's mind. An association is an army. Discussion offers an opportunity to count heads and stir spirits, after which it is time to march out and meet the enemy. The members of an association may regard legal resources as a useful means of action but never as the only path to success.<sup>14</sup>

The result, as Tocqueville himself put it, was that in nondemocratic Europe associations "eschew civil norms" and "adopt military habits and principles."<sup>15</sup> In the United States, by contrast, "association is understood differently."<sup>16</sup> Their energies were directed, Tocqueville believed, to challenging the "*moral* ascendancy" of the majority, not its power in the physical or administrative sense. Rather than taking action and seizing power, their communicative actions aimed at engaging the wider solidarity, "to discover which arguments are most likely to make an impression on the majority." Because American associations oriented themselves to public opinion and to creating a wider, more encompassing solidarity, "the minority always hopes to attract enough additional support to become the majority."

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In order to explain this fundamental difference between European and American association, Tocqueville must look beyond the simple existence of voluntary association in the traditional, liberal sense of the term. While allowing that "the obvious differences between us and the Americans in this respect are explained by several things," he ultimately connects the different forms of voluntary association to the extent of underlying solidarity. Whereas in Europe, the associations out of power "are so different from the majority that they can never hope to gain its support," in America "only shades of difference separate one opinion from another." One thing that contributes to the greater solidary feeling among American voluntary associations is widespread voting rights: "Of all the causes that help to moderate the violence of political association in the United States, the most powerful, perhaps, is universal suffrage. It is universal suffrage, one of the principal regulatory institutions of civil society, that allows a majority to acquire "moral force," and it is this moral status that leads civic associations away from extra-democratic violence to engagement

in civil communication.<sup>18</sup> Later in his discussion, Tocqueville writes that “laws do more to maintain a democratic republic in the United States than physical causes do, and mores do more than laws,” and in a footnote to “remind the reader of the general sense in which I use the word mores,” he asserts “I mean the whole range of intellectual and moral dispositions that men bring to the state of society.”<sup>19</sup>

Tocqueville’s understanding of the necessity for democratic associations to be oriented to a shared and solidarizing public engagement, rather than simply to be voluntary, is critical; so is his perception that even such publicly-oriented associations can engage in communicative action that pollutes opponents as anti-civil enemies. What mars his argument is its one-sided empirical application. He treats American associations in an idealized way. The national distinction he draws has the effect of camouflaging the empirical variation within civil associations. By the time Tocqueville visited America, there had already been centuries of anti-civil efforts by publicly oriented associations. This did not mean that they became putschist, violence-oriented conspiracies, as Tocqueville suggested was frequently the case in France. It did mean that, even in America, associations entered the civil sphere, and engaged public opinion, as often to narrow social solidarity as to broaden it. Whether their ambition was to broaden or to narrow solidarity, associations could accomplish their aims by evoking stigmatizing representations that polluted other associations, not just by engaging with other groups in a civil manner based upon mutual recognition and respect.

#### SUPPORT FOR THE ALTERNATIVE THESIS

Of course, Tocqueville was by no means the first social theorist to recognize the anticivil possibilities of civil associations, nor was he by any means the last. In his contributions to the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison wrote eloquently about the dangers of factions, and he insisted on the separation of powers as a counterbalancing institutional system of regulatory control. In fact, those who crafted the American Constitution focused on the divisive aggressiveness of civil associations<sup>20</sup>, as have passionate critics of “special interests” ever since. Employing the adjective “special” is designed, of course, to designate a group’s narrow and constricting aims.

Sociologists have often related the anti-democratic effects of voluntary associations to their internal organizational form. Lipset,

Trow, and Coleman made this internal antagonism to democracy the foil for their classic study, *Union Democracy*. At the very beginning of their book, they noted that “the pattern which characterizes almost all voluntary organizations was generalized over forty years ago by the German sociologist Robert Michels when he laid down his famous ‘iron law of oligarchy.’”<sup>21</sup> Lipset and his colleagues assert that “in their trade unions, professional societies, business associations, and cooperatives – in the myriad [of] nominally democratic voluntary organizations, the experience of most people ... would tend to confirm Michels’ generalization.”<sup>22</sup>

Since Michels first wrote, many books and articles have been written about oligarchy in voluntary organizations, but almost invariably they have documented the operation of his iron law in another set of circumstances. They have shown how control of the organization machinery, combined with membership passivity, operates to perpetuate oligarchic control.<sup>23</sup>

In their effort to find out what might counteract this anticivil tendency in associations, the authors of *Union Democracy* point, as Tocqueville had before them, to the offsetting role that can be played by the other communicative and regulatory institutions of civil society, emphasizing the role of democratic elections and competing outlets for public opinion, such as newsletters and newspapers. If these other institutions were present, they suggest, associations are more willing to reign in their competition, to obey overarching rules of the game, to allow power to change hands in a peaceful way.

The research of social scientists since the publication of *Union Democracy* has confirmed the caution that dampened its authors’ enthusiasm for association in its pristine, unadorned form. In the *Encyclopedia* article I noted above, David Sills addressed the prevailing belief that “since voluntary associations can exist only in societies in which freedom of association exists, and since such societies are more or less democratic in their ethos and political structure, there is an expectation that members will take an active part in the affairs of the association and that democratic procedures will govern its conduct.”<sup>24</sup> Pointing to a range of different empirical studies, however, Sills warned that “this expectation often is not met; although most voluntary associations have constitutions, bylaws, or oral traditions that call for full participation by the members, the ‘iron law of

oligarchy' formulated by Robert Michels generally has greater weight."<sup>25</sup>

In fact, camouflaged beneath Putnam's influential ecomiums for face-to-face associations, one finds him acknowledging the "need to take into account the fact that closely-knit social, economic, and political organizations are unfortunately prone to corruption."<sup>26</sup> The problem is that, given his emphasis on association per se, Putnam cannot explain why or how this anti-democratic tendency might be counter-acted. Yet, once again without acknowledging that he is doing so, Putnam actually refers to a whole set of non-associational factors that can critically affect the democratic capacities of associations. In his historical reconstruction of the process that led to the creation of communal democracies in late medieval Northern Italy, he mentions "elaborate legal codes" which "confine[d] the violence of the overmighty,"<sup>27</sup> and a "public administration" which, because it was "professionalized," allowed "legitimate authority in the North" to be "only delegated to public officials, who remain responsible to those with whose they are entrusted."<sup>28</sup> In fact, Putnam even points beyond these institutions to the cultural milieu within which associations launch their claims. He stresses the significance in Italy's late medieval period of a "renewed civic morality" that mandated "fraternal assistance" and "hospitality toward strangers," a cultural ethic whose effect was to "prevent the new society from tearing itself apart in internecine strife."<sup>29</sup>

In other words, associations can contribute to democracy only if they are intertwined with the full range of communicative and regulative institutions, and the cultural codes which crystallize the idealizing normative commitments of the civil sphere. The communicative potential of voluntary associations is facilitated by these other institutions, even as they provide critical inputs in turn. If clubs and associations are merely self-referential, they play no effective role in society's civil sphere, though they may perform important functions in their respective noncivil spheres. Before the feminist movement brought women into the paid workforce, for example, hospitals benefited greatly from their women volunteers. So did elementary and high schools from their largely female Parents Teachers Associations (PTA's).<sup>30</sup> To become organs of civil society, however, such associations must direct their particular interests outward, into the broader network of solidary ties and claims.

Historical considerations lend support to these theoretical arguments about the tendencies of contemporary society. As Michael Schudson shows, civil associations first emerged in a democratic context that put a high premium on solidary communication. It was in the run-up to the American Revolution that self-organizing, issue-oriented groups, as compared with state-directed or ascriptive organizations, first achieved prominence on the American scene. "With a political crisis looming," Schudson writes, "the colonists made use of their various means of communication, of which newspapers were only the most visible."

Colonial elites knew one another through trade; businessmen in one colony might buy real estate in another. They knew one another through college experience. Yale attracted many students from New York and Massachusetts as well as Connecticut [who] did not necessarily return to their home colonies but chose to settle elsewhere ... Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers representing most of the colonies banded together with annual meetings and committees of correspondence ... A wide variety of social, economic, educational, and religious contacts transcended colonial borders, and so did common interests in science, medicine, or the arts.<sup>31</sup>

Schudson's point is that this new organizational form emerged in response to demands for greater solidarity and mutual understanding on a national scale. The fragmentation created by the wide dispersment of isolated, local neighborhoods could be overcome only with the help of civic association. If this was true for the problem of creating civil solidarity between colonies, it was equally the case for breaking down barriers within each colony itself.

As for communication within a colony, formal and informal organizations operated as well as newspapers. Boston's social clubs and Masonic lodges became centers where people could come together to talk politics (among other things). A caucus system coordinated Boston artisans and prepared them to vote ... at town meetings. While New York had no similarly focused system, its taverns were a regular site for political talk.<sup>32</sup>

It is actually this outward, civil orientation that provides the benefits that the neo-Tocquevillian perspective erroneously ascribes to association in and of itself.

"RIGHTLY UNDERSTANDING" TOCQUEVILLE

Putnam traces the striking diminishment of some of America's most beloved voluntary associations, and decries the decline of

American civil society which he sees as the result.<sup>33</sup> Only such face-to-face association, he believes, can “foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust.”<sup>34</sup>

As we have learned from this discussion, however, voluntary associations play this solidarizing role only if they can assume a communicative form. As sources of situationally-specific applications of broad civil discourse, lobbying groups, public service associations, and clubs of all sorts do play a singular and irreplaceable role in defining the boundaries of the civil sphere and offering justifications for placing groups inside and outside it. Such associations represent particular interests – economic, political, ethnic, religious, racial – and they employ every possible resource on their behalf. In order to effect such representation, however, they must develop civil influence. In doing so, regardless of their particular interest, and whether or not they evoke polluting or purifying discourse, they reinforce the solidarity of the broader community that exists beyond it, contributing to the normative standards that function to hem these particularistic interests in.

If Tocqueville’s views on associations are “rightly understood,” we can see that this is precisely what he was pointing toward in his study of democracy almost two hundred years ago.

#### NOTES

- [1] This distinction recalls the difference between functional and communicative interests that Jürgen Habermas developed in *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1 and 2*, tr. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984-1987). The approach differs in suggesting that the critical issues is not whether an organization actually *is* civil but whether it enters into the civil sphere to justify its aims and interests. Its ambitions may, in fact, be anti-civil and its discourse may employ highly polluting rhetoric.
- [2] Theda Skocpol, *Boomerang: Clinton’s Health Security Effort and the Turn Against Government in US Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).
- [3] Emile Durkheim, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1997 [1902]).
- [4] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963); Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a*

- Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989 [1963]), 35-43.
- [5] Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971), S. M. Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Vintage, 1965), Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), Dahl R. A., *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in America City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961).
- [6] Willaim Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959); C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).
- [7] Michael Banton, *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 357.
- [8] David L. Sills ed., *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 363.
- [9] Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- [10] Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1) (1995); Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
- [11] Jean Cohen, "Does Voluntary Association Make Democracy Work?" in Neil Smelser and Jeffrey C. Alexander, eds., *Diversity and Its Discontents: Cultural Conflict and Common Ground in Contemporary American Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 268).
- [12] quoted in Putnam, "Bowling Alone," 18, italics added.
- [13] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 216.
- [14] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 220.
- [15] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 222.
- [16] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 221.
- [17] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 220.
- [18] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 220-22.
- [19] Tocqueville, *DAI* (Trans. Goldhammer), 352-53.
- [20] Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*. New York: Martin Kessler Books, 1998, pp. 60-65
- [21] Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow, and James S. Coleman, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 4.
- [22] *Ibid.*
- [23] Lipset, Trow, and Coleman, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union*, 5.
- [24] Sills, *International Encyclopedia*, 368-9.
- [25] *Ibid.*
- [26] Putnam, "Bowling Alone," 32.
- [27] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 125.
- [28] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 128, 130.

- [29] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 125-126. In spite of himself, in other words, Putnam agrees with Cohen, one of his sharpest critics, who warns that “participation in associations and membership in social networks could foster particularism, localism, intolerance, exclusion, and generalized mistrust of outsiders, of the law, and of government.” Cohen adds that, “without other mediations, there is no reason to expect that the forms of reciprocity or trust generated within small groups would extend beyond the group, or, for that matter, that group demands would be anything other than particularistic” (Cohen 1999: 269-70)
- [30] Robert Wuthnow, “Democratic Liberalism and the Challenge of Diversity in Late-Twentieth-Century America” in Neil Smelser and Jeffrey C. Alexander, eds., *Diversity and Its Discontents: Cultural Conflict and Common Ground in Contemporary American Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 19-36.
- [31] Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 42.
- [32] Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, 43
- [33] The decline of such face-to-face groupings has become the focus of both radical and conservative Republican criticism of contemporary society, which Neil Smelser and I have criticized as a diffuse and largely inaccurate “discourse of discontent” (J. C. Alexander and N. Smelser 1999; cf., Wuthnow 1999, Schudson 1996). For example, Jean Elshtain in *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995) asserts that “it is no longer possible for us to speak to one another: “We quite literally (*sic!*) inhabit our own little islands of bristling difference where we comport with those just like ourselves” (quoted in Wuthnow, loc. cit., *Diversity and Its Discontents*, 1999:20). In *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), Francis Fukuyama similarly opines that “the moral communities that made up American civil society at midcentury, from the family to neighborhoods to churches to workplaces, have been under assault, and a number of indicators suggest that the degree of general sociability has declined” (cited in *Diversity and Its Discontents*).
- [34] Putnam, “Bowling Alone,” 20.