

Communicative Institutions:  
Public Opinion, Mass Media, Polls, Associations

CIVIL SOCIETY IS defined by a particular kind of social relationship, one that has to do with universalistic solidarity. In a complex, far-flung, and relatively anonymous social order, this historically unusual kind of relationship can be widely accessible only if it is articulated symbolically, as a generalized language that can be spoken by many different kinds of people. Hence the importance of the discourse of civil society, the language of binary oppositions I have just described. At the same time, however, these collective representations of an imagined community can and must be articulated in more specific and mundane ways. Members of civil society act not only within a cultural environment but within an institutional one.

In comparison with generalized symbolic patterns, institutions focus on goals and norms, rewards and sanctions; in a word, they constitute social organization. Social organization operates inside of a cultural milieu: An institution can think only inside of the categories that culture provides.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, organizations are as strongly oriented by pragmatic as by ideal concerns. The actions that unfold inside organizations are much more specific and contingent than the generalized categories of culture. As a result, although the structures and activities of institutions are oriented by the discourse of civil society, they cannot be determined by them.

The institutions of civil society crystallize ideals about solidarity with and against others in specific terms. They transform general conceptions about the purity and impurity of motives and relations into specific, normative, sometimes sanctioned, one-time-only social relationships. They articulate specific claims and binding demands for inclusion and exclusion, for liberation and for repression. In so doing, they issue orders, arrange bargains, make exchanges, produce statements, create interpretations, offer rewards, threaten and often confer punishments. The institutions of civil society make it possible for the pure and impure criteria of civil society to permeate the other, noncivil spheres of social life. Civil institutions intrude into noncivil institutions and groups; they are continuously restructuring them and being restructured by them in turn.

Institutions such as law, office, party organization, and “free and fair” elections articulate solidarity in concrete and specific ways, not only through the definitions of moral behavior they project but by sanctions and rewards. These form what I call the regulatory institutions of civil society, and we will discuss them in chapters 6 and 7 below. These more “material” forms, however, by no means exhaust the organizational structures of the solidary sphere. The inclusive and exclusive relationships established by civil society are articulated by communicative institutions as well. It is important to lay out their structure and process before we move on to consider civil institutions of a more regulative kind.

From the cultural and symbolic lifeworld of civil society, intuitive criteria are created that shape behavior in more organized and formal domains. Civil society in this sense should be understood not merely in terms of contrasting symbolic categories but as structures of feeling, the diffusely sensed obligations and rights that represent, and are at the same time evoked by, contrasting solidary ties. Collective representations of such social relationships are broadcast by civil society institutions specializing in communicative, not regulative tasks—by the mass media, public opinion polls, and voluntary organizations. The structures of feeling that such institutions produce must be conceptualized as influence rather than authoritative control, or power in a more structural sense. They institutionalize civil society by creating messages that translate general codes into situationally specific evaluations and descriptions.<sup>2</sup> Before we analyze these organizations of influence, however, we must discuss the lifeworld of public opinion which anchors communicative and regulative institutions alike.

## The Public and Its Opinion

There is an intuitive, phenomenological sense of civil society. This structure of feeling, which is at the same time a feeling of structure, is evoked and objectified by the notion of “the public.” In the minds of most democratic theorists, it seems, the notion of the public points to the existence of an actual group, to actual deliberations, and to an actual place. According to this concrete notion of the public, members of a closely knit polity meet with one another in the same physical environment, vigorously debating the events that affect their lives. Inspired by the ancient Greek polis, Arendt insisted on the importance of such a concrete understanding—on “being seen and being heard by others”—in her republican analyses of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Influenced by Arendt and the classical aspects of the socialist tradition, the early Habermas also laid heavy emphasis on the public as a concrete space.<sup>4</sup> In his normatively informed historical reconstruction, Habermas claimed that the republican inclinations of the bourgeoisie first emerged in opposition to the private and hidden activities of the king’s private household in patrimonial absolutist regimes. This bourgeois preference for open, transparent, and public relationships culminated in the conversation-filled coffeehouses and salons of the eighteenth-century British and French commercial centers. According to Habermas, it was in these public houses that the emerging middle classes debated plans for democracy in a straightforward, rational manner.

This republican equation of public with face-to-face interaction has extended well beyond the normative and Marxist traditions. Max Weber, in his neglected essay on the critical significance of the Western city, and other observers of early modern Europe as well,<sup>5</sup> have drawn attention to the manner in which the Renaissance city-states sustained remarkably high degrees of concrete public life, constructing open places for political discussion that objectified and focused the postmedieval experiences of expanded solidarity. Meetings of the aroused publics of these city-states not only exposed official corruption but allowed demands for greater economic equality to gain normative legitimation for the first time. The preference for thinking of publicness in concrete, face-to-face terms extends, in fact, well beyond the rationalist tradition of Enlightenment thought. Walzer and Mayhew, for example, have argued for the religious origins of the early modern public, demonstrating how the dualistic, dialogic nature of Protes-

tant religiosity and the egalitarianism of its sect organization opposed the secrecy and hierarchy of medieval life.<sup>6</sup>

As my earlier analyses of symbolically articulated solidarity indicate, however, the civil spheres of large, differentiated, and plural societies can no longer be understood in such concrete terms.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that the traditional idea of the public no longer plays a role in contemporary societies, but that it now assumes a symbolic rather than concrete form. The symbolic representation of traditional public functions is a regulating idea, one that carries with it an obvious force. But it is not the concrete public as a face-to-face association that is fundamental to contemporary civil societies. It is the idea of that public as it has inserted itself into social subjectivity as a structure of feeling. In order to gain influence, actors must speak the language that makes the democratic public into a regulative ideal.<sup>8</sup> The normative reference of the public sphere is a cultural structure, the discourse of civil society.

It is as “public opinion” that public space has its most fundamental repercussions in the present day. Tocqueville insisted that it is the peculiar force of public opinion vis-à-vis the political sphere—not the force of the concrete public composed of face-to-face associations—that distinguishes democratic from authoritarian rule. In a democracy, he wrote, “public opinion is in effect the dominant power.” It is because this “guiding power,” for example, “asserts itself through elections and decrees” that “in exercising executive power, the President of the United States is subject to constant and jealous scrutiny.”<sup>9</sup>

Public opinion articulates the cultural structure of civil society, defining democratic and antidemocratic opinions, publics, representative figures, and regulative institutions. Such binary structuring marks the history of political thinking about the role that public opinion can play. Theorists ambivalent about democracy have conceived the public’s opinion in both ways, as gullible and easily swayed, irrational and emotional, and as constituting the potential for tyranny, even as, at the same time, they have found inside public opinion a deep reflection of the rationality, individuality, and independence that marks democratic life. In *The American Commonwealth*, James Bryce recognized in public opinion a “din of voices” that “talks incessantly” and “complains,” has an “inability to recognize facts,” an “incapacity to imagine a future,” and is “swayed only by such obvious reasons as it needs little reflection to follow.” He claimed to observe that, “quick and strenuous

in great matters” and “heedless in small matters,” public opinion has “dulled the sense of responsibility among the leaders in political life” and “is a danger to the people themselves.” In the next breath, Bryce asserts that “public opinion is a sort of atmosphere, fresh, keen, and full of sunlight [that] kills many of those noxious germs which are hatched where politicians congregate.” He continues that “selfishness, injustice, cruelty, tricks . . . of all sorts shun the light,” that “to expose them is to defeat them,” that “it is the existence of such a public opinion as this, the practice of freely and constantly reading, talking, and judging of public affairs . . . that gives to popular government that educated and stimulative power which is so frequently claimed as its highest merit.”<sup>10</sup> Though Tocqueville preferred democratic opinion to the particularism of aristocracy, he also spoke darkly of the potential tyranny of the majority as the unforeseen product of the influence of public opinion. Emphasizing the binary of dependence-independence, he complained “I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than in America.”<sup>11</sup> More optimistic democratic thinking, by contrast, grants to public opinion the civil qualities that democracy requires. In his idealistic celebration of the public opinion poll, published in 1940, George Gallup evoked the central category of truth. “Public opinion listens to many propagandas, most of them contradictory,” he writes, insisting that in the clash and conflict of argument and debate public opinion tries “to separate the true from the false.”

Public opinion is critical, not submissive; experimental, not dogmatic; and oriented to the individual, not the mass. It needs criticism for its very existence, and through criticism it is constantly being modified and molded. It acts and learns by action. Its truths are relative and contingent. . . . Its chief faith is a faith in experiment. It believes in the value of every individual’s contribution to political life, and in the right of ordinary human beings to have voice in deciding their fate. Public opinion, in this sense, is the pulse of democracy.<sup>12</sup>

To the degree that civil society exists, the taken-for-granted, apparently mundane but enormously important phenomenon of public opinion emerges. To refer to public opinion is to indicate, to invoke, and to represent the pure and impure ideas, feelings, and evaluations that members of society

hold about one another. Commenting upon the ongoing, unpredictable, and seemingly unstructured events and figures of social life, public opinion consists of factual accounts, emotional responses, and moral evaluations of their extent and effect. Tocqueville saw this clearly, but he limited the phenomenon to American political life. Marx did not see this at all, and Weber was unable to give to public opinion a theoretical place in his descriptions of modern life. By contrast, Durkheim insisted on the omnipresence of opinion, though he ascribed it to the influence of "society" and identified it with the "collective consciousness" rather than with the civil sphere and democratic life.<sup>13</sup> Gabriel de Tarde, similarly affected by the effervescence of the new Third Republic in France, also emphasized the centrality of opinion, relating it the dynamics of fashion, the currents of conversation, and the institutions of newspapers, all clearly associated with the communicative domain.<sup>14</sup>

American social thinkers in the early twentieth century, such as Walter Lippmann and John Dewey, also recognized the centrality and independent power of public opinion, but too often their deeply republican normative suspicions and their insufficiently developed social theories made them believe this independence to be on the wane.<sup>15</sup> Since these early formulations, and indeed in part because of them, the social scientific discourse about public opinion has been reduced to quantitative surveys of individual attitudes. Public opinion is rarely seen as a highly significant macrosociological topic in its own right. The tradition of Thrasymachus makes it hard to see this kind of invisible source of influence; only the visible exercise of power is given free reign.<sup>16</sup>

Within the constraining yet at the same time nubile structures of public feeling there flows the economic divisions, ethnic segments, and ideological polarities that fragment democratic social life. Groups with diverse power, interests, and capital of various kinds produce and compel sharply differing views of one another. It has been the stock-in-trade of social scientists to demonstrate that public opinion depends upon—in technical terms, "varies in relationship with"—more particularistic groups and concrete structural processes, such as class formations, ethnic and regional groupings, education, race, and mobility rates. Even in segmented and multicultural societies, however, there remains an element of public opinion that orients itself to the society qua collectivity, to an audience of citizens and to institutional actors only insofar as they are members thereof. To elaborate this proposition

in theoretical and empirical detail is, indeed, one of the main ambitions of this book.

Members of different and conflicting groups certainly have their own opinions about many things, but it is only their "public" opinions that make these ideas evident. If they are to have broader influence, these opinions have to be couched in terms of the regulatory idea that a broader society exists, both as a normative and a real audience, outside of their particular groups. Publicly broadcast opinions may be expansive or restrictive in their attribution of the capacity to engage in the discourse of liberty; they may appeal to the public fact of civil solidarity in order to demonize significant segments within it and reduce the civil community's size. In either case, the social role of public opinion is pretty much the same: it mediates between the broad binaries of civil society discourse and the institutional domains of social life. Public opinion is the sea within which we swim, the structure that gives us the feeling of democratic life.

## The Mass Media

The media of mass communications—radio, television, newspapers, the Internet, magazines, best-selling books, and movies—constitute one fundamentally significant articulation of the imagined and idealized civil domain. In both fictional and factual forms they create the characters that people civil society and establish what might be called its communicative boundaries with noncivil domains.

### *Fictional Media*

The symbolic forms of fictional media weave the binary codes of civil society into broad narratives and popular genres. They provide a continuous flow of representations about ongoing social events and actors. Yet in comparison with factual media, such fictional forms operate at a temporal remove from these other representations of daily life. What they gain in return is a much greater cathartic impact on the self-understandings of civil society, on the structures of feeling that define its identity as a civil place. Though their avowed purpose is entertainment, not enlightenment, this very distinction

ignores the necessarily aesthetic framing of rational acts.<sup>17</sup> Fictional media create long-lasting frames for democratizing and anticivil processes alike. They constrain action by constituting a teleology for future events, even as they seem merely to be telling stories about people and life in an ahistorical and fictional way.

Expressive media stipulate events and figures that are relevant to members of civil society. Drawing on the repertoire of dichotomous categories, their plots make these events and characters “typical,” placing them into revealing and easily interpretable situations that represent civil and uncivil motives and relations. Insofar as television, movies, and popular fiction depict action in particular social spheres, they do so by communicating an image of these actions—sometimes idealized, sometimes extremely harsh—in relation to the standards for participation in civil society, and they broadcast these narratives to some of the individuals and groups that compose society at large.<sup>18</sup>

Historically, it has been the media of high culture that have played this aesthetic-educative role. It was through the narrative structures of its fiction, in the works of writers like Balzac and Flaubert, and not only through their own actual life experiences, that educated members of French society came to form an understanding of the harsh class relations and cruel authoritarianism that distorted French institutions, both civil and uncivil, in nineteenth-century industrial society. It was through Dickens’s extravagant and wildly popular novels that the English middle classes were not only informed about the crushing poverty of early capitalism but were taught to sympathize with the plight of the poor and to support sentimental social reform. The structures of these and other popular narratives, including those by such influential, socially oriented women novelists as Jane Austen, have often been called realistic, and their observational detail and down-to-earth qualities certainly made them seem so at the time. In retrospect, however, we can see that they were decidedly melodramatic and moralistic in their representations. The social forces responsible for restrictions on participation, differences of wealth, and cultural prejudices were explained by narratives that constructed and punished selfish, greedy, and irrational antagonists. In so doing, the novels mobilized public opinion against polluting threats to the ideals of civil society.<sup>19</sup> In her enormously influential novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe represented race relations to antebellum Americans in exactly the same melodramatic and empathy-provoking way.

Her narrative greatly affected public opinion. “Less than a year after its publication in March 1852,” writes historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, “more than three hundred thousand copies of the novel had sold in the United States, a sales rate rivaled only by the Bible.” Beecher’s novel stimulated the formation of antislavery civil associations and social movements. Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist leader, described it as a “flash” that lit “a million camp fires in front of the embattled hosts of slavery.” In this cultural but very real manner, this fictional reconstruction helped to trigger the Civil War, and thus to abolish the slave relationships that so severely undermined the civil pretensions of American society.<sup>20</sup>

Such sociological students of literature as George Lukacs, Leo Lowenthal, and Ian Watt have argued that novels like these merely reflected actual social life. Nineteenth-century novels were realistic, or moralistic, because they depicted the nature of capitalist society, its class domination, patriarchy, poverty, and racism. Such a perspective, however, ignores the existence of civil society as a differentiated social sphere. If fictional writers were indeed deeply affected by the deprivations of economic, racial, and familial life, they were responding not only to actual situations outside of themselves but to their own inner desires, as members of the civil sphere, to speak on behalf of oppressed groups to society at large. Through their fictional work, in other words, they gave voice to the idealized aspirations of civil society itself. As Peter Brooks writes in *Realist Visions*, “The discovery of the ugly is part of the process of disillusioning in which realism deals,” with the result that “realism as the ugly stands close to realism as the shocking, that which transgresses the bounds of the acceptable.” This exploration of the aesthetically profane fuels the nineteenth-century novel’s broader social and moral ambitions.

England develops a recognizable “industrial novel,” one that takes on the problems of social misery and class conflict, and France has its “roman social” . . . Balzac and Zola, for instance, both write their principle works following a revolution that . . . confronts them with the stark question: To whom does France belong?<sup>21</sup>

Elizabeth Long studied the fictional heroes that peopled post-World War II American best-sellers.<sup>22</sup> She found that these collective representations reflected not only the economic strains in American society, but also broad

cultural themes of individual achievement and independence. In the 1960s, she found, these characterizations gave way to heroes who experienced anguish about this very individualism and who wanted to live in a more collective and socially involved way. These representations contributed to the turn toward more activist and critical interpretations of American culture at a time when the boundaries of civil society were being aggressively challenged as unfairly restrictive.

Until recently, scholarly attention remained focused on such high culture. To understand the expressive media of contemporary civil society, however, one must see that popular folklore and folk dramas have always performed similar kinds of sentimental education for the less educated members of society. In the postmodern era of television and digital communication, in fact, the long-standing relation between high and low culture has been inverted. Mass entertainment has increasingly displaced high culture as the principal medium of expressive communication for members of contemporary civil societies, a fact that postmodern concerns with "mediatization" have identified but understood in an overly critical way.<sup>23</sup>

The racially bifurcated civil society of America in the 1950s was symbolized, and reinforced, by such family television dramas as the *Ozzie and Harriet Show*, which represented the idealized qualities of American civil life in the dramas of white families only. At the same time, such satiric comedies as *Amos and Andy* represented African-Americans in polluted terms that implicitly justified their exclusion from the civil sphere. During this same period, the violent colonization of the native peoples of North America, which had created the grossly unequal relations between white European settlers and American Indians, was represented by the Western genre. Because these plots largely associated Indians with violence and cunning and allowed civility to be represented primarily by white settlers, they implicitly justified the exclusion of Indians, their subjugation, and even their murder by representatives of white civil society. As Americans experienced the shocks of the 1960s and 1970s, the conflicts between movements for liberation and the repressive backlash movements against a more inclusive society found their symbolic expression, and explanation, in such popular evening sitcoms as the *All in the Family*, which depicted the conflict between a conservative and prejudiced white working-class male and his long-haired, rebellious, but ultimately sympathetic son. During the years of the highly polarizing Vietnam War, anticolonial and antiwar sentiments were broadcast

not only through rational arguments and social movements, but through such expressive and popular television entertainments as *M.A.S.H.*, which featured the cynical portrayal of Army physicians in the Korean War and interpreted American military intervention in comedic and often critical terms.

Americans experienced the protagonists and antagonists of such televised dramas as personal acquaintances. Iconographic symbols of collective sentiments, they became part of everyday speech in those turbulent years. Such representations communicated in direct and emotionally powerful ways, allowing Americans to express their civil judgments in figurative rather than intellectual language, which made it easier, in turn, to identify with one or another solidary group. When the patriarchal distortions of American civil life were being challenged in the 1970s, the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* provided an attractive, widely influential representation of the new woman in the form of the comedy's doughty, resilient, anxious but always independent and competent heroine. Thirty years later, when the incorporation of women had deepened, the stars of *Sex and the City* celebrated a female version of civil society in which personal autonomy and moral obligations were continuously recombined. New understandings of gay and lesbian Americans were symbolically configured through increasingly insistent and normalizing fictional reconstructions of their civil competence. Sometimes these were assimilative and normalizing, as in *Will and Grace*, but often, as in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, they were multicultural and pluralistic.<sup>24</sup>

In the wake of the Civil Rights movement, and its transforming effects on the class structure of the African-American community, *The Cosby Show* emerged as the dominant American entertainment program of the 1980s. Sympathetically interpreting the greatly expanded black middle and professional class to white Americans, this televised entertainment can be seen as critical to the civil reconstruction of a group that had earlier been seen in almost entirely repressive terms. For the first time, an African-American adult male was represented as the warm, wise, loving, intelligent, and highly successful breadwinner of a "normal American family." The contrast to the restrictive racial representations of the family broadcast by *Ozzie and Harriet* three decades earlier could not have been more evident. During the same decade, Alex Haley's television miniseries, *Roots*, watched by record audiences in 1977 and rebroadcast several times since, performed a similar civil-aesthetic function. Reconstructing black Americans as rooted rather than

rootless, as resistant victims of oppression fiercely committed to self-improvement and worldly success, the drama allowed white ethnic Americans to experience a new solidarity with their black contemporaries.<sup>25</sup> Two decades after *Cosby*, the Latino family comedy *George Lopez* became the longest-running series with a Hispanic cast in television history. Interviewed by the *Daily News* about the show's success, the actress who played the main character's wife suggested that "people just see us as people" and "funny is funny."<sup>26</sup> In the midst of this new interracial climate, the Western genre pitting cowboys against Indians virtually disappeared. Its themes of violent race-based conflict and civilizational vulnerability were displaced into battles between democratic Americans, or earthlings, and threatening invaders from imperial, anticivil empires located somewhere in outer space.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Factual Media*

In contrast to this fictive manner, the news side of the mass media articulates public opinion and specifies the solidarities of civil society in a less visibly constructivist and much more immediately influential manner. For most members of civil society, and even for members of its institutional elites, the news is the only source of firsthand experience they will ever have about their fellow citizens, about their motives for acting the way they do, the kinds of relationships they form, and the nature of the institutions they might potentially create. The factual as compared with fictional status of the news media makes them more significant in affecting immediate social decisions, from the formation of social movements to affairs of state. The reputation of news media—their very ability to represent the public to itself—depends on the belief by their audiences that they are merely reporting on the social world, not constructing it, that they are describing the social world factually, in an objective manner, rather than representing it in artistic or moral terms. In creating the world of society immediately and without remove, news draws upon what the French film theorist André Bazin called the ontology of realism.<sup>28</sup> Emphasizing speed, accuracy, and neutrality, news presents itself as homologous with the real world, as the *New York Times*' slogan, "All the News That's Fit to Print," so vividly suggests.

Yet every news judgment remains an interpretation of significance, one

that is achieved by typifying previously unrecognized events in discursive categories that are already understood.<sup>29</sup> News media select a tiny range of sites from the enormous onrush of people and events that characterizes everyday social life. Merely by informing members of society about what events "exist," they have already made decisions about which events matter, about what is happening and what is at stake in social life. In their very representation of social facts, in other words, the news media represent public opinion as well.<sup>30</sup> In answering their famous four questions—"who, what, where, and why"—the lead paragraphs of news reports characterize the people who make these events, why they acted in the way they have, and what effect their actions will have on the structure of society. Do these newly observed actors deserve to be inside or outside of civil society? Do they threaten "us"—the news audience—in a manner that suggests we should mobilize against them, or do they allow us to feel good about ourselves, so much so that we might wish to reach out and lend them a helping hand? The role of binary oppositions is critical here. Contrasts between purifying and polluting motives, relations, and institutions permeate news accounts, linking the presuppositions of civil society to the seemingly random outpouring of social events. Sensationalist, yellow journalism presents overtly exaggerated judgments, emphasizing the negative and frightening figures and events of social life. It would be a mistake, however, to think that more professional and sophisticated journalism fails to adhere to the structured pathways of civil society discourse as well.

From the structured and generalized categories of civil society discourse to the diffuse but more historically and socially directed phenomenon of public opinion to the institutions of news, there stretches a continuum from synchronic to diachronic, from structure to process, from inflexible to flexible, from general to specific, and from unresponsive to flexible. Even in regard to an ongoing event, news media may shift in their interpretations, moving from civil to uncivil framing devices from one week to the next, from one day to another, even from hour to hour.<sup>31</sup> These discursive constructions create reactions in civil society itself. They can trigger violent actions, or the formation of social movements. They can reach deep into the inner workings of noncivil spheres and prepare the path for reconstructive repair. Media interpretations can roll back and make more restrictive the solidarities of civil society in turn.

Because they control such vital interpretive tasks, the factually oriented

institutions of mass communication, more than the fictional ones, create chronic tensions between the utopian aspirations and relationships of civil society and the powers and authorities outside the civil sphere. When they apply polluting categories to an event or actor, news reports create public relations problems for “sectarian” religious institutions, “abusive” family relationships, “secretive” or “greedy” corporations, “elitist” scientific institutions, and the “partisan” or “manipulative” actors of political life. To broadcast news reports that construct groups and institutions in such profane terms is to problematize their relation to civil society.<sup>32</sup> Even the occasional news report, or exposé, can lead to a torrent of public demands for internal reforms. Once the reforms are made, factual media often monitor the affected institutions to make sure that their reconstructed relationships remain congruent with the idealized standards of civil society.

The argument over whether news media first emerged from the bourgeois sphere, from private economic life, during the early days of capitalist society is controversial and important precisely because it calls into question the very capacity of such communicative media to create tension between civil and noncivil spheres. If news originated merely as a means to promote commerce, how could it function as anything other than a commodity, particularly inside the advertising-saturated milieu that marks television and print news today? Habermas may be the best-known critical theorist to have tried this strategy of genealogical deflation, but he is by no means the only influential voice who has taken aim at the news media in this way. From Karl Marx to C. Wright Mills and Pierre Bourdieu, social scientists have proclaimed that the news media cannot be factual, that they cannot obtain the relative autonomy from market demands that would allow this potentially critical interpretive medium to sustain the moral autonomy of the civil sphere.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, however, news media first emerged as a means to advance not only economic claims but political, religious, and ethnic ones.<sup>34</sup> As early modern societies began to cohere in wider and more inclusive communities, moreover, public declarations about the factual nature of social life did, in fact, come to have much greater effect. As diverse and competing publics—plebian, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, immigrant, black, socialist, and conservative—formed to contest particularistic and restrictive forms of social control, they created more independent news media in turn.

Far from being a threat to the civil and solidarizing function of the

media, bourgeois commercialization actually encouraged it. News media that could sustain themselves in their own terms, by their own sales, were more independent of particularistic publics. Such financially independent media allowed the members of civil society, who were also members of these particular groups, to participate vicariously in an anonymous civil collectivity and, at the same time, to articulate their individual wills as consumers. So the creation of increasingly large commercial markets for news from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries actually pushed the process of media differentiation further along.<sup>35</sup> The project of professionalizing journalism did so as well. Without market sales and mass advertising, independent media would have had to continue to depend on private individual wealth or on the financial resources of such particularistic noncivil spheres as churches, trade unions, and political parties. The emergence of professional norms of objectivity, while in no sense eliminating the journalist’s interpretive function, relegated the more dogmatic and explicit political opinions of private media owners to the editorial page.<sup>36</sup>

To the degree that civil society becomes independent, which marks the degree to which there is a democratic social life, the audience for media of mass communication, whether fictional or factual, becomes the broad “society” rather than particular interests within it.<sup>37</sup> This more inclusive social reference depends, in turn, on the institutional differentiation of mass media organizations. This involves, on the one hand, impersonal markets for information and fictional forms, which allow communication to be acquired via negotiated exchanges among buyers and sellers rather than through more personalized and clientelist relations that involve political and ethnic loyalty, class relationships, or ideological control. Differentiation also depends on the emergence of professionalized occupational ethics emphasizing objectivity and creative autonomy. Such ethics, along with self-regulating guilds, allow producers, writers, directors, and reporters more freedom to offer flexible interpretations responsive to shifting events. They can focus simply on “what is real and accurate” and “what will seem believable and dramatic” rather than on more dogmatic interpretations that merely authenticate loyalties to particular groups and particular institutional spheres. As the messages they formulate relate to society at large, they become more truly media of persuasion and less masked instruments for hegemony and domination. To the degree that this occurs, fewer groups and categories of person are polluted by the categories that justify exclusion from civil society.<sup>38</sup>



Even in this more differentiated and civil situation, however, dichotomous evaluations of persons and events continue to be made, for pollution and purification are structural features of civil society as such. Even when media take society as their reference, their understandings of it are subtly fused with particularistic ideas and influenced by pressures from other spheres. Political parties, social classes, economic exigencies, religious faith, ethnic and racial animosities, gender and sexual groupings—these and other fissures continue to segment even the most differentiated civil societies. Institutions of mass communication crystallize the stereotypes and misunderstandings such fragmentation implies, even when they idealize some social event or institution in civil societal terms. The very differentiation of media, moreover, makes them the focus of continuous efforts at manipulation by elites in other spheres. Their independence makes them vulnerable to “public relations,” to staged events, and to more direct forms of corruption like bribes. For in the mass markets for influence and symbolic capital, media are not only sellers but buyers at the same time.

Already in 1835 Tocqueville could discern the intrinsic connection between newspapers and the independent public opinion upon which democracy depends. The press, “lays bare the secret springs of politics and obliges public men to appear before the court of public opinion.” It is “through the press that the parties speak to one another without meeting face-to-face and understand one another without direct contact.” While an “individual newspaper has little power,” the power of the press “in general” is “second only to that of the people.”<sup>39</sup> Critics of the media have always insisted, to the contrary, that their independence gives newspapers and television license to violate civil norms, to misrepresent, to distort, to pander, and to stereotype. Not long after Tocqueville’s defense of their civil status, for example, a Virginian congressman objected strenuously to the role played by Northern newspapers in promoting the antislavery cause, associating media effects with antidemocratic passions and violence. “Newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, and pictures,” he complained, were “calculated, in an eminent degree, to rouse and inflame the passions of the slaves against their masters, to urge them on to deeds of death, and to involve them all in the horrors of a servile war.”<sup>40</sup> In response to such efforts at pollution, journalists have identified their professional autonomy with the positive attributes of civil discourse, emphasizing the truthfulness of their reporting and its promotion of rational thought and independent action. In 1731, when Benjamin Frank-

lin was attacked for printing what was considered an offensive advertisement, he published an “Apology for Printers” that made the case in precisely these terms.

Printers are educated in the Belief that when men differ in Opinion, both sides ought equally to have the Advantage of being heard by the publick; and that when Truth and Error have fair Play, the former is always an overmatch for the latter: Hence they cheerfully serve all contending Writers that pay them well, without regarding on which side they are of the Question in Dispute.<sup>41</sup>

### Public Opinion Polls

Public opinion as an active social force is a relatively recent phenomenon in human societies, as are the media of mass communication that inform the public about the “facts” of social life. Public opinion polling is a more recent institution still. More directly and explicitly than the media, polls define the contours of the public even as they take the measure of “its” opinion.

Perhaps because polls are so ubiquitous in contemporary life, their broad theoretical relevance has rarely been conceptualized; when they have been subjected to attention, their communicative role has scarcely been appreciated. By aggregating individual opinion into a group form, polls give objectivity to “public” opinion. In making it visible and numerical, they also make it constraining, allowing this ephemeral, materially invisible cultural phenomenon to become a much more specific, politically more powerful communicative force. Publicized polls provide “hard data” about the lifeworld of the civil sphere, allowing it to be construed independently of other exigencies and institutions. Polls represent this lifeworld as filled with reflection, as based on the responses of independent and thoughtful people. The very process of polling attributes to its interviewees rationality and sincerity, converting the members of civil society from a passive, voiceless, and potentially manipulable “mass” into a collective actor with a voice and intelligence of its own.<sup>42</sup>

In 1940, George Gallup published an intellectually ambitious defense of polling, a few years after his own polling institutions had surfaced as a major factor in America’s national political life. Gallop addressed “the various

questions and criticisms” that had been generated by this “new instrument,” for example the claim that it undermined democracy by making the public appear “stupid and unreliable.”<sup>43</sup> Gallup replied by linking the new technique to the liberating rather than the repressive side of civil discourse. The method of random sampling, he suggested, provides a set of “factual observations” that are more “realistic” than the merely subjective claims about public opinion projected by this or that activist group.<sup>44</sup> What endangers public opinion is the possibility that it can be “controlled.”<sup>45</sup> “One can never be sure that the letter, telegram, or petition avalanche is the product of a genuine protest, or merely the organized effort of a small but powerful pressure group parading as a majority.”<sup>46</sup> The issue of outside pressure acknowledges that anticivil motives and relations can pollute the play of communicative institutions. “When aggressive minorities are on the march,” Gallup asks, “how is the Congressman to decide where the truth—or where the greater truth—lies, especially when, as so often happens, the minority represents itself as the majority?”<sup>47</sup> This danger can be addressed, Gallup argues, only by scientific polling. It purifies public opinion by supplying truthful information to the people’s representatives: “The sampling referendum offers a gauge of strength for the claims and counterclaims which reach the American legislator.”<sup>48</sup> This “new instrument” can “bridge the gap between the people and those who are responsible for making decisions in their name,” he wrote.<sup>49</sup> “The public-opinion polls provide a swift and efficient method by which legislators, educators experts, and editors, as well as ordinary citizens throughout the length and breadth of the country, can have a more reliable measure of the pulse of democracy.”<sup>50</sup>

In his second book, a decade later, Gallup once again responded to critics who tried to frame polls in an anticivil way. Acknowledging that a “good many” of those polled were “ignorant and uninformed”—character traits that would suggest the necessity of antidemocratic institutions—Gallup argues that these weaknesses can be overcome by random sampling. Polls reveal that a majority “usually registers sound judgment on issues.” Polling is legitimate because “democracy . . . requires merely that the sum total of individual views add up to something that makes sense.”<sup>51</sup> Polls allow the collectivity to achieve rationality even when individuals are not rational themselves.

In reality, of course, polls not only reveal but construct “the public’s” shifting attitudes toward the continuous, fragmented, and difficult-to-

interpret flow of ongoing social events. Their forced choice questions organize the public’s opinion in a manner that makes it seem homologous with, and therefore responsive to, the binary codes of civil society. Do whites think that African-Americans are lazier than whites? More inclined than whites to steal and to engage in violence, often of a sexual kind? Are Jewish Americans loyal to their country? Are Communists? Is the president trustworthy or faithless, deceitful or honest? Is he his own man or likely to rely on the judgments of others? Clearly these are as much simplifying constructions of public opinion as measurements of it; they simultaneously mirror and apply the pure and impure categories that the discourse of civil society provides.

It is precisely this circularity that makes polls so fundamentally important to the independence and self-understanding of civil society. It is also what allows them to exercise such a diffuse but often decisive form of communicative control over economic, political, and even cultural spheres. During the two-year Watergate crisis in American society, an upheaval that decided the fate of so many powerful individuals, institutions, and elites, decisions about the precise wording of poll questions triggered large-scale political effects.<sup>52</sup> If it was not literally true that “the public,” as revealed through public opinion polling, ruled during this crisis, it is certainly true that other, more traditional collective actors could exert their force only by presenting themselves as acting in the public’s name. Political parties, lobbying groups, institutional elites, and powerful individuals could appeal for their just deserts only if they evoked the public’s opinion.<sup>53</sup> When public response registered in small but fateful numerical shifts in the polls, seismic changes in state institutions would follow.

Insofar as the news media themselves rely increasingly on polls to report on public opinion, polls become an even more powerful, doubly objectifying social force. There develops a kind of sub-rosa dialogue, what literary theorists call *intertextuality*,<sup>54</sup> between these two communicative institutions. Because pollsters rely upon news-mediated constructions of recent events, they are formulating questions not about the public’s opinion in some open-ended sense, but about what the public wants to know about a situation that has already been communicatively constructed in reference to the binaries of the civil sphere. Polls are asking, in this way, about what the public wants to know about itself, insofar as this self has already been symbolically defined by the news. Rather than asking what people know about a situa-

tion, polling questions are directed to what people can be expected to know in the current situation, given the context of opinion as it has developed already. The questions of pollsters, then, are not neutral or detached, in the scientific sense of value-neutrality, but typifications, in the phenomenological sense, based on information that is already known.<sup>55</sup> Polling questions are collective representations that try to extend the horizon of civil ideas, the structures of feelings that the public have already expressed, to information and events that have not yet been processed. It is this already familiar quality of polling questions that ensures the relevance of polling results to the diffuse and anxious concerns of public opinion more broadly defined. It also ensures that polling results will be relevant to news media in turn, that they will be able to examine polls and report back to civil society about what “it” thinks about itself.

In a detailed study of Hong Kong newspapers and polling agencies during the high-stakes battle between mainland Chinese officials and the island’s British governor general, Christopher Patten, Agnes Ku has documented such intertextual dynamics in a crisis that seemed to threaten Hong Kong’s very existence as a civil society.<sup>56</sup> Drawing upon long-standing codes and narratives in Hong Kong political culture, leading newspapers tended initially to portray Patten as an honest democrat, despite his colonial associations, and China as an oppressive and threatening force. Polling agencies relied on these constructions and formulated forced choice questions that “discovered” increasing public support for Patten’s demand that China make promises about ensuring Hong Kong’s democratic status after its ties with Britain ended. However, as the tension between China and Britain mounted, and its destabilizing implications became more evident, public anxiety increased. Newspapers reported Chinese accusations that British demands for democracy were hypocritical, that they merely masked Great Britain’s continuing colonial intent, and China’s suggestions that Patten was determined to proceed no matter what the consequences for Hong Kong’s economic well-being. In the midst of these new factual representations from the mass media, opinion polls began reporting that Patten’s sincerity was being more frequently questioned and that he was being connected much more frequently than before to the antidemocratic themes of colonialism. The percentage of “don’t knows” on questions about support for Patten’s suggested reforms increased dramatically. This “fact” was immediately highlighted by leading newspapers, which now began to represent the crisis not

as a last-ditch effort to protect Hong Kong’s emerging democracy but as an indication that the island’s economic future, and even its long-term social viability, was now under siege. The result was a gradual if grudging acceptance of the authority and strategy of the People’s Republic of China in the transition, an authority that was, in fact, fundamentally ambivalent on the matter of Hong Kong’s democratic aspirations.

Because polls are so often taken as crystallizations of the opinion of civil society as a whole—no matter what the actual fault lines created by the civil sphere’s internal stratification—publishing poll numbers constitutes an event to which democratically elected politicians must offer a response, either in words or deeds. In democratic societies, the effects of these public representations happen quickly, primarily because the electoral franchise, which I will later discuss as a basic regulating institution, allows public opinion to directly intrude upon the state. In France, in 1991, only six weeks after assuming office as the nation’s first female Prime Minister, the socialist Edith Cresson confronted a shocking decline in civil support. The *International Herald-Tribune* headlined “Cresson Meets Enemy: Public Opinion Polls” on its front page. Despite her close association with French President Mitterand, Cresson’s initial moves had “fallen flat,” constructed in dangerously anticivil terms. Her maiden speech to parliament had been “tedious and unfocused” and her economic policy had “alienated” both workers and middle class professionals. It was no wonder that, according to the subhead, “Only a Fourth of Electorate Approves Her Performance in First Six Weeks.”<sup>57</sup> Cresson left office shortly thereafter.

In the summer of 2005, U.S. news media sympathetically broadcast, as “factual information,” the drama of Cindy Sheehan staging an antiwar vigil outside the Texas White House of President Bush to protest her son’s death in Iraq. The palpable effect of their construction on the American civil sphere, however, became apparent only with the nation-wide publication of opinion polls. The lead story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* broadcast “Public’s Support of War Faltering,” reporting that support for the war had fallen from two-thirds to 44 percent in just one year. Large pictures of “average citizens” with block quotations indicating their skepticism were splashed artfully across an inside page. “These sentiments are mirrored in the polls,” the paper assured its readers, providing copious charts and graphs that documented the public’s change of mind. The *Inquirer* reported as fact the growing separation between state power and civil sphere: “Bush is losing

his domestic battle for hearts and minds.” If in a democratic society politicians are representatives of the civil power, they must win not only the heart but the mind of the public to their side.<sup>58</sup>

In antidemocratic societies, political officials use their power to prevent the influence of civil society and its opinions from being separated from the state. They make polling illegal or, if that is impossible, they repress or manipulate poll results, or pollute and undermine their claims. For more than half a century, Mexico had been essentially a one-party state, ruled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. As the date approached for the modern nation’s first freely contested Presidential election, in July, 2000, the PRI made it impossible for accurate polling data to be published, making it more difficult for the civil sphere to be organized against the state. When pollster Rafael Gimenez’s surveys suggested merely that challenger Vicente Fox was running strongly against the PRI candidate, the government allowed the results to be published in the newspaper *Milenio*. In April, however, when Gimenez’s survey found that Fox has taken a surprising lead, *Milenio* announced that they had found a new pollster. Gimenez’s results were never published, and he was denounced as either inept or careless, or as having sold out. When a second pollster did report Mr. Fox in the lead, PRI officials ridiculed him and publicly criticized his technical abilities. After a third pollster was blocked, she published her anti-PRI results in the *Dallas Morning News*. She later recalled the results, “suddenly my phone went silent” and “the PRI put out the order to the radio and TV stations: bury that witch.”<sup>59</sup> Despite these efforts to block this key communicative institution, however, Fox won the election. The other communicative institutions, most notably the newspapers, but also civil associations, were able to sustain the independence of the civil sphere in a still powerful way.

In the Soviet Union’s transition to democracy, the establishment of public opinion polls also played a fundamental role.<sup>60</sup> During Perestroika, the sociologist Yuri Levada, once a disgraced dissident, was allowed to establish the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion on Social and Economic Issues. In February 1989, the center inserted a full-page questionnaire on social and political conditions in the Soviet Writer Union’s weekly newsmagazine, the *Literary Gazette*. The poll triggered an immediate reaction among *Gazette* readers, who considered themselves part of the emerging civil sphere. The magazine received two hundred thousand responses, whose

aggregated opinions described degradation in a wide range of different services and called for fundamental changes in the moral fabric of institutional life. Because it allowed the public to speak in an apparently authoritative, scientific, and measurable manner, these results helped legitimate President Michael Gorbachev in his drive to reform state power.

In the long run, the shock value of this poll had even deeper effects. Employing some of the central categories of the discourse of civil society, an associate director of the All-Union Center attested that the polling process served to crystallize the democratic self-image of the Soviet people. “Through the decades people have never been asked anything,” he remarked. “All of a sudden their opinion is being counted—someone is seeking their answers.” His conclusion was revealing: “They feel this is some sign of trust toward them, a demonstration of their worth.” Polling suggests trust in the sincerity, honesty, and intelligence of the people, the interviewees. When public polls are systematically conducted and publicized for the first time, it is hardly surprising that the members of a nascent civil society can experience a new sense of worth. Yuri Levada was subsequently interviewed about the incident, and he emphasized the qualities of active independence that this communicative institution of civil society brings out. “Russia was deep in sleep, nothing was happening,” Levada remarked. When the poll results were published, “for the first time we saw that our people are not only ready to answer a bold question but they actively want to speak out.”<sup>61</sup>

Even in democratic societies that have institutionalized the regular publication of opinion polls, the results are often distorted in ways that reflect the strains of fragmenting forces like class, gender, race, and internal colonialism. This was illustrated in a particularly dramatic manner in Israel in the summer of 1989, when Elihu Katz, Hebrew University professor and newly appointed director of the Israel Institute for Applied Social Research, and Majid Al-Haj, sociology professor from Haifa University, announced that, for the first time, Israel’s Arab citizens would be included in the sample upon which the monthly Continuing Survey of Israel citizens was based. The Israeli public’s opinion had until then excluded the views of its subordinated but legally enfranchised Arab group. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, when Israeli-Arabs were included, poll results revealed a striking shift in “Israeli Opinion.”

Taking account of the usually unsolicited voice of Israeli Arabs tilts nationwide opinion in a “dovish” direction. If a referendum were held today on the question, “Are you, on the whole, more inclined towards a solution that favors annexation of the territories or towards a solution that favours yielding the territories,” 53% of Israeli Jews would favor annexation [and] 44% would favor yielding territories . . . If the Arab vote is added to this distribution, the dominant position shifts . . . from holding the territories to giving them up . . . A majority (52%) of all Israelis would favour yielding territory.<sup>62</sup>

### Civil Associations

There is still another source of the situationally specific symbolic communication that permeates the civil sphere. 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 offshore oil spill, a threatening toxic waste dump, the poisoning of an underground water reserve. They can be middling organizations that, though large in scale, have arisen in more time-sensitive ways, for example, “Historians against the War,” a group within the Organization of American Historians that opposed the Vietnam War, or the “Citizens Trade Committee,” a group formed to oppose the North American Free Trade Act.

What these groups have in common is that they have stepped outside the role structures 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 they have, in accomplishing a particular task, gone beyond purely functional interests 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>63</sup> In making their case for the particular, functional interests they represent, these associations are compelled to make an appeal to the entire civil community or to those mandated to represent it.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup>

In September 1993, the newly elected administration of president Bill Clinton proposed a sweeping reorganization of the nation’s largely private, and increasingly expensive and restricted, health care delivery system. Armies of insurance, hospital, and doctor associations set out to defeat the Democratic president and his wife, Hilary Rodham Clinton, whose task force had developed the reform proposal. For many members of these associations, the stakes were material and institutional: if the reforms went through, they would lose their jobs. For many others, the interests were political and ideological: they aimed to prevent a significant expansion of the welfare state, the success of which would have increased public support for the Democratic Party at the expense of the Republican Party. Whatever the reasons for their resistance, one thing was clear: they could not block the Clinton reforms

by using their resources directly, by disrupting the state or by blocking the measure inside the medical profession or the health care delivery spheres. Instead, they would have to enter into the civil sphere and engage in communicative action. If they had simply presented public opinion with the importance of their particular interests, however, they would have generated little solidarity. Without support from wider public opinion, their particular, functional interests might have been viewed unfavorably by the journalists who articulated factual frames for interpreting the health reforms, by the polls presenting the public's shifting opinions, and by the civil officers, such as congressmen, 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, reduce their incomes, or challenge their ethical ideals in a narrowly institutional sense. What these civil associations set out to do, instead, was to intertwine their interests and ethics with the broader civil sphere.

When President Clinton unveiled his reform package to the American people, he presented it as a "health *security*" measure that would extend civil solidarity by repairing a deeply stratified, unequal, and unfair distribution of medical care. He was also careful to root this collective theme deeply inside the discourse of liberty. In the run-up to presenting the reforms, the Clinton team had worked hard to avoid any hint of the coercive and bureaucratic, rejecting public characterizations that mentioned such words as "plan," "managed care," or even "program," and in the speech proposing his new legislation, the president criticized the status quo as giving the American people "few choices."<sup>66</sup> The success of this initial civil construction was immediately evident. Public opinion strongly supported the measure, and an influential television pollster and political analyst praised the president for his "intellect" and "conviction" and the first lady for her "compassion and concern."<sup>67</sup> Six months later, the tables had been turned, with 15 percent of poll respondents changing from positive to negative. By August 1994, Democratic congressional leaders declared the reform package dead in the water, and the same influential television commentator now accused the Clinton administration of "awesome political stupidity." He polluted the reform plan as "the living embodiment of Big Government—or Big Brother," describing it as having been hatched by a group of "self-anointed experts" in "secret" meetings "chaired by a sinister . . . and a driven First Lady."<sup>68</sup>

This defeat was historic. It set the stage for the neoconservative seizure of power in congressional elections in November of that year.

Pundits during the debacle, and academic analysts for long after, attributed the defeat of the liberal proposal to material force, to the power of the medical and insurance lobbies and the vast sums of money they had at their disposal. The truth was quite different. The most active lobbying group, the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), had actually lost power and money in the months preceding the struggle; the "big five" insurance companies had withdrawn from that lobbying association, declaring that the HIAA was "paralyzed by small insurers who are opposed to national health care reforms."<sup>69</sup> The force in this situation was discursive, not material.

In the eleven months between the reform proposal's birth and death, there had ensued one of the most frenzied public relations contests in modern American history.<sup>70</sup> Health plan opponents had prepared rhetorical strategies for months, and hard-hitting advertisements and press conferences appeared virtually the day after the president's speech. By contrast, the administration's own public relations campaign, which could have provided crucial rhetorical leadership, took months to get in gear.<sup>71</sup> In the interlude, opponents succeeded in constructing the reform proposal in repressive, anticivil terms. They argued that the newly proposed health system would be antidemocratic; 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. According to a social science student of the debacle, Theda Skocpol, one series of TV ads in particular became "veritable icons" of the conservatives' rhetorical success.<sup>72</sup> Between September 1993, and summer 1994, the HIAA released three waves of advertisements featuring "Harry and Louise," a fictional middle-class couple who gravely discussed the merits of the Clinton reforms and, after much seeming goodwill and erstwhile hesitation, always ended up coming down on the negative side. "This plan forces us to buy our insurance through those new mandatory government health alliances," Louise lamented, to which Harry readily assented, adding that the alliances would be "run by tens of thousands of new bureaucrats."<sup>73</sup> The factual and the fictional media of communication bleed together; both are directed by the binary discourse of civil society.

After the health care measures were defeated, 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 to the control of civilly regulated state authority. For-profit health maintenance organizations (HMOs) became omnipresent, and they introduced 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, nationwide consumer lobbies arose, demanding regulation and reform. To do so, they entered communicatively into the civil sphere. To gain solidarity with U.S. 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 HMOs 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>74</sup>

Oscillating in this manner between particular interests and cultural coding, civil associations scan public opinion, make efforts to affect the symbolic constructions of the civil sphere projected by factual and fictional 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 civil life and the phenomenological lifeworld of intuitive civil sensibility—the structures of civil feeling—that supports and restricts them.

By naming these kinds of groups civil associations, I am differentiating them from the much more general category of “voluntary associations,” which has played such a pronounced role in democratic theory and empirical debate. In the era of civil society I, when democratic thinkers linked civil society to virtually every association outside of the authoritarian state, associations were defined as voluntary insofar as they were not state-directed. They were voluntary, that is, in the sense that citizens were free to form them, and members free to join them or leave them, without being subject to political coercion. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville made a great deal of such formations, seeming to praise the new American democracy for the fact that its citizens took matters into their own hands by forming associa-

tions rather than simply waiting upon the beneficence of a paternalistic state.<sup>75</sup> But Tocqueville was hardly alone. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, and particularly in his preface to its second edition, Durkheim heralded the significance of what he called secondary associations for providing mediations between the impersonal bureaucratic state and the individual.<sup>76</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 coffeehouses and salons.<sup>77</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 I criticized in chapters 2 and 3. Against the conservative and radical theories that posited the inevitability of mass society and elite domination,<sup>78</sup> and in contrast to the big-state theories that romanticized state Communism and its totalitarian control, 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>79</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>80</sup>

In recent decades, this civil society I 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 found sympathetic responses in both academic circles and the popular press. From his sweeping empirical study of democratic and authoritarian tendencies in Italy to his attacks on television viewing and his pithy observations about the dangers of bowling alone,<sup>81</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, like civil society I theory more generally, it seems rather 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 unform 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 nonstate 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 clubs, star-gazing groups, 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, it might be argued, are anticivil in some vital ways. Though revolutionary secret societies, such as the Weathermen of the late 1960s or the American militia of the 1990s, 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 these other factors orient an association to engage with the broader solidarity groupings that exists outside itself. As 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>82</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 a manner that increases feelings of strangeness and antagonism among 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 the group is oriented to issues outside of itself, and whether in relation to these it displays a communicative intent.<sup>83</sup>

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 put it,<sup>84</sup> 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 nonstate groups. He called attention, instead, to their having “perfected the art of pursuing their common desires in common.”<sup>85</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 the variable relationship between association and democracy is not. 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 way,” on the other.<sup>86</sup> By public adherence, Tocqueville means that, to be part of the civil sphere, associations must have a civil orientation, a communicative interest in influencing public opinion. By qualifying this definition still further, by emphasizing that these publicly oriented associations must spread their doctrines in a “certain way,” Tocqueville draws attention to the binary possibilities of communicative action. Civil associations can articulate their interests in both civil and anticivil terms.

These ambiguous possibilities were illustrated when Tocqueville undertook to demonstrate that, in his time, voluntary associations actually occurred just as frequently in nondemocratic as in democratic societies. By doing so, he shows 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 argue that civil associations were more prom-



inent in democratic America than in nondemocratic Europe. What he claimed, rather, is 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 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>87</sup>

The result, as Tocqueville himself put it, was that in nondemocratic Europe, associations "eschew civil norms" and "adopt military habits and principles."<sup>88</sup> In the United States, by contrast, "association is understood differently." 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."<sup>89</sup>

In order to explain this fundamental difference between European and American association, Tocqueville must look beyond the simple existence of voluntary association in the civil society I sense of the term. Though 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, which I will later define as 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 extrademocratic violence to engagement in civil communication.<sup>90</sup> Later in his discussion, Tocqueville writes that "the laws do more to maintain a democratic republic in the United States than physical causes do, and mores do more than laws." In a footnote, he "remind[s] the reader of the general sense in which I use the word mores": "I mean the whole range of intellectual and moral dispositions that men bring to the state of society."<sup>91</sup>

Tocqueville's understanding of the necessity for democratic associations to be oriented to 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 anticivil enemies.<sup>92</sup> What mars his argument is its one-sided 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 anticivil 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. Indeed, whether their ambition was to broaden or to narrow solidarity, associations could accomplish their aims by evoking repressive categories and creating polluting associations, not just by utilizing liberating categories and creating purification.

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 Federalist Paper 51, 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 U.S. Constitution focused on the divisive aggressiveness of civil associations,<sup>93</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 antidemocratic effects of voluntary associations to their internal organizational form. Seymour Lipset, Martin Trow, and James 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 by the German sociologist, Robert Michels, when he laid down his famous ‘iron law of oligarchy.’”<sup>94</sup> In “their trade unions, professional societies, business associations, and co-operatives—in the myriad [of] nominally democratic voluntary organizations, the experience of most people,” Lipset and his colleagues assert, “would tend to confirm Michels’ generalization.”<sup>95</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>96</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 are 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.” 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>97</sup>

Camouflaged beneath his influential encomiums for face-to-face associations, Putnam actually himself acknowledges the “need to take into account the fact that closely-knit social, economic, and political organizations are unfortunately prone to corruption.”<sup>98</sup> The problem is that, given his emphasis on association per se, Putnam cannot explain why or how this antidemocratic tendency might be counteracted. Without acknowledging that he is doing so, however, Putnam refers to a whole set of nonassociational 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” that “confine[d] the violence of the overmighty,<sup>99</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 affairs they are entrusted.”<sup>100</sup> In my discussion of the regulatory institutions of civil society in chapters 6 and 7, law and office will be presented as fundamentally important forms of social control. 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 designed to “prevent the new society from tearing itself apart in internecine strife.”<sup>101</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 civil potential of voluntary associations is promoted 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 Parent-Teacher Associations. To become organs of civil society, however, such groups 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>102</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 colonies 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 with 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>103</sup>

It is actually this outward civil orientation that provides the benefits that the neo-Tocquevillian civil society I perspective erroneously ascribes to association in and of itself. Putnam traces the striking diminution of some of America's most beloved voluntary associations and decries what he sees as its result: the decline of American civil society.<sup>104</sup> Only such face-to-face interactions, he believes, can "foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust."<sup>105</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 a broader community, contributing to the normative standards that function to hem these particularistic interests in.

This approach to civil associations adumbrates my understanding of the decidedly anti-institutional forces represented by social movements, to which I will devote chapter 9. In the chapter that immediately follows, however, we turn to civil institutions in their regulative form.

26. Alexander, "Watergate as Democratic Ritual."

27. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*; Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes*, pp. 354-402.

28. For an insightful fictional representation of this tendency in American culture, see P. Roth, *Plot against America*.

29. For a sweeping historical overview of how "civil society" and "fanaticism" have been deeply intertwined, indeed constitute nothing less than "conjoined histories" in political thought from the Greeks to modern times, see D. Colas, *Civil Society and Fanaticism*.

In the deeply controversial manifesto *The Concept of the Political*, which Carl Schmitt produced on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power, we are offered a sophisticated rationalization for a violently antidemocratic state and its ambitions for wider domination. In a manner that, at first glance, seems eerily to adumbrate the position I am putting forward here, Schmitt emphasizes the inevitability of the discursive binary friend/enemy. The differences between our positions, however, are dramatic and telling, not only normatively but theoretically and empirically. Schmitt traces the origins of the friend/enemy binary to the state's struggle for power and domination, not to the semantics of moral language or the civil sphere's symbolic construction of solidary boundaries that could, in principle, place moral regulations over state power and violence. "It is the state as an organized political entity," he writes, "that decides for itself the friend/enemy distinction" (pp. 29-30). Rejecting a cultural position theoretically, a democratic position normatively, and the possibility for an autonomous civil sphere empirically, Schmitt insists that, for a "realist," politics could not involve "symbolic wrestlings" or "intellectual controversy" (p. 33). These were concerns only for a weak-kneed liberalism mistakenly focused "almost solely on the internal struggle against the power of the state," a move that makes of the state "a compromise and of its institutions a ventilating system" (70). As compared to a democratic liberalism that seeks to control the state, Schmitt insists that politics is inevitably associated with violence and war. It is the "fighting collectivity" that demands the division between friends and enemies, so that it can provide the "real possibility of physical killing," a "real enemy" that can be attacked with "the utmost intensity." For further discussion of Schmitt, see chapter 5, n. 55.

30. R. Smith, *Civic Ideals: conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, p. 4. In his systematic and empirically rich exposure of the ascriptive and exclusionary dimensions that shadow the better known and "official" democratic, liberal, and republican strands, Smith's work supports the general thrust of the approach I am developing here. There are two differences worth noting. One is that Smith sees the negating, antithetical civil ideals as existing outside of liberalism and republicanism, as representing a third tradition that is ascriptive, particularistic, and antidemocratic. The approach I have developed here suggests, to the contrary, that the

antidemocratic, repressive elements of civic ideals are postulated directly within democratic discourse itself. Second, the source from which Smith reconstructs the content of civil ideals is different from the one I employ here, and so is his explanation for their form. In locating the roots of the contradictory and paradoxical logic of American political culture in legal and legislative decisions, he does not construct it as a relatively autonomous discourse but sees it as the result, in the first instance, of "the imperatives of state building" (p. 39) vis-à-vis a complex and divided social structure. These imperatives express themselves, according to this notion, in the need that political leaders have to maintain their power by manipulating the masses; they suggest themes of peoplehood that can satisfy the masses' need for psychological security and moral worth (pp. 32ff.). In his essay "The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion," Charles Taylor observes that "there is something in the dynamic of democracy that pushes toward exclusion," but he, too, locates the source of this paradox in something outside, rather than inside, democratic civil discourse. In his case, it is the need for democracies also to maintain "something like a common identity . . . to form an entity and have a personality" (p. 143).

#### CHAPTER 5

1. Douglas, *How Institutions Think*. Compared with those following the classical Weberian approach to organization, contemporary "neo-institutionalists" have downplayed purely instrumental-pragmatic concerns and incorporated more culturally oriented concepts. See, for example, J. W. Meyer and Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations," and DiMaggio and Powell, "Iron Cage Revisited." Nonetheless, even those who articulate such an institutional approach tend to homologize patterns of organization and culture, such that culture qua meaning—the internal patterning of symbols via codes and narratives—fails to achieve relative autonomy vis-à-vis organizational restraints. See, for example, Friedland and Alford, "Bringing Society Back In." For further discussion of these issues, see chapter 6.

2. In her empirical analysis of elites and public opinion, Susan Herbst has emphasized just this specifying, multilevel process: "Interest groups are more than simple surrogates for public opinion. . . . They translate opinion, but during this translation process they also help to give public opinion a more solid and comprehensible form" (*Reading Public Opinion*, p. 53). For the conceptual distinction between influence and authoritative control or power, see Parsons's important essays on influence and power as generalized media of exchange in *Politics and Social Structure*, pp. 352-438, distinctions that were later elaborated and modified by Jürgen Habermas in *Lifeworld and System*, esp. pp. 266-282. If this distinction is not made—if communicative institutions are not conceptually differentiated from coercive control, whether in states or organizations—then power can be conceptualized only as hegemony in the

Gramscian sense or power-knowledge in the Foucauldian. In neither case is it possible to conceptualize an independent civil sphere and, thus, democracy as I have conceived it here.

3. Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 57.

4. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. For more recent versions of this critical republican position, see the normative work on deliberative democracy (chap. 3 n. 8) and the continuing wave of empirical analyses aimed at reforming putatively passive public opinion, e.g., Fishkin, *Voice of the People*.

5. M. Weber, “The City,” and Sennett, *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities and Rise and Fall of Public Man*.

6. Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints*; and Mayhew, *Public Spirit*.

7. Diana C. Mutz makes the same point in her empirical study of the transformation of the public from direct relationship to impersonal public opinion, which constitutes a kind of “generalized other” in the sense of George Herbert Mead (*Impersonal Influence*).

8. For a similar criticism of Habermas and Arendt, and the suggestion of the idea of the public as a regulating ideal, see Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 203–206, and Cooke, *Re-Presenting the Good Society* (chapter 3, n. 62, above).

9. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part I, chap. 8, p. 40.

10. Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, pp. 499–505.

11. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part II, chap. 7, p. 293.

12. Gallup and Rae, *Pulse of Democracy*, p. 8. For a comparison of Bryce and Gallup that evaluates their conflicting writings on public opinion in terms of empirical accuracy, rather than as reflecting the binary discourse of civil society, see *Voice of the People*, pp. 71–81.

13. Durkheim, conclusion to *Division of Labor in Society*.

14. For example, Tarde, “Opinion and Conversation.” For an illuminating reconstruction of Tarde’s public opinion theory in terms of contemporary media and symbolic action theory, see Katz et al., “Press-Conversation-Opinion-Action.”

15. John Dewey wrote, in *The Public and Its Problems*: “The confusion which has resulted in the size and ramifications of social activities has rendered men skeptical. . . . Men feel that they are caught in the sweep of forces too vast to understand or master. Thought is brought to a standstill and action paralyzed” (p. 135). Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, wrote: “The public citizen today has come to feel rather like a deaf spectator in the back row [who] cannot quite manage to keep awake. . . . He is being swept along by great drifts of circumstance. . . . He does not know for certain what is going on, or who is doing it. . . . His sovereignty is a fiction” (p. 13).

16. But see the recent work by Susan Herbst and Diana Mutz cited in notes 2 and 7.

17. It has been common for democratic theory to maintain a sharp distinction

between factual or normative truth, on the one side, and fictional-aesthetic experience on the other. The roots of this tension can be traced back to Plato’s suspicion of theater and rhetoric, expressed for example in his *Gorgias*, but in terms of modern debates it begins with Nietzsche’s embrace of the aesthetic-expressive and his sharp rejection of universalizing morality, as in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. In contemporary times, this distrust has been most forcefully and influentially expressed by Habermas in his polemic against Hans Georg Gadamer (“A Review of Gadamer’s Truth and Method”). In that essay, he insists on associating hermeneutic analysis, or expressive understanding, with tradition, and he portrays the latter as antimodern and antidemocratic; hermeneutic analysis, he argues, is antithetical to theorizing that embraces the normative aspiration of rationality, autonomy, and social emancipation. For an important alternative philosophical argument, one which embraces fiction as a source of ethical-moral instruction, see Booth, *The Company We Keep*. There has been a revisionist movement within the Habermasian tradition to widen his normative theory to embrace the aesthetic and symbolic, most energetically by rethinking some of Habermas’s key concepts via the philosophy of Hannah Arendt. In *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, for example, Benhabib argues that “the term *communicative action* does not quite capture the conceptual issues that Arendt, as opposed to Habermas, had in mind.” Thus, “instead of *communicative action*, I shall use the terminology of the *narrative model of action*,” which depicts “action embedded in a ‘web of relationships and enacted stories’” and combines “the constative as well as the expressive.” The “rational core” of this model, Benhabib writes, “cannot be as clearly extricated as Habermas would like” (p. 124). For another example of this culturally oriented revisionism, see Cooke, *Re-Presenting the Good Society* and also Maria P. Lara, *Moral Textures*.

18. Fass, “Television as a Cultural Document: Promises and Problems”; Glover and Kaplan, “Guns in the House of Culture?”; Seyhan, “Ethnic Selves/Ethnic Signs”; Mukerji, “Monsters and Muppets”; T. Rose, “Rewriting the Pleasure/Danger Dialectic”; Lembo, *Thinking through Television*, particularly the empirical analyses of “plausibility” and “narrative-based viewing,” pp. 168–185; and Long, *Book Clubs*.

19. The normative rationalism that has broadly informed Habermas’s philosophy of the public sphere has obscured the fact that at one important moment in his normative reconstruction of Western history, he actually paid special attention to the aesthetic domain. The sentimental novel, he wrote, allowed “self-clarification of private people focusing on the genuine experiences of their novel privateness,” explaining that “the psychological novel fashioned for the first time the kind of realism that allowed anyone to enter into the literary action as a substitute for his own, to use the relationships between the figures, between the author, the characters, and the readers as a substitute relationship for reality.” The notion of a “substitute relationship for reality,” which allows readers to enter into literary action, is complementary to the argument that I am developing here, though it is hardly limited

to the genre of literary realism. The explicitly cultural focus of the present discussion allows me to view such aesthetic projections and identifications as an ongoing and vital dimension of civil discourse and public opinion formation; the restrictions of Habermas's rationalist perspective, by contrast, compel him to speak of such literary identifications as merely a "training ground for a critical public reflection," as a "literary precursor of the public sphere" (*Structural Transformation*, pp. 29, 50, emphasis added). An alternative, less determinately rationalist perspective on the relation between fiction and emancipation, still broadly within the Marxist-critical tradition, can be found in Raymond Williams's analysis of the fiction of protest against industrial society in nineteenth-century England, in his essay titled "A Nineteenth Century Tradition." For nineteenth-century fiction as realistic, and thus reflecting industrialism, see Jameson, *Political Unconscious*; for a contrasting view and an analysis of Austin's art as a fictional reconstruction of variable moral capacities, see Lara, "Narrative Cultural Interweavings: Between Fact and Fiction," in *Moral Textures*, pp. 92–104. For nineteenth-century novelist art and narratives about purity and corruption, see P. Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*. For a critical argument against reading "realism" as fiction that allows transparent access to truthful observation rather than as itself a meaning-genre, see Jakobson, "On Realism in Art."

20. Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. 161. See also W. L. Miller, *Arguing about Slavery*, pp. 333–335. For a discussion of moral empathy and the romantic movement in fiction, see G. Hartmann, "Sympathy Paradox."

21. Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision*, pp. 8, 13.

22. Long, *American Dream and the Popular Novel*.

23. Sherwood, "Narrating the Social."

24. In his essay "From the Polluted Homosexual to the Normal Gay," Steven Seidman has emphasized the importance of fictionalized reconstructions of homosexuality in American film, and he demonstrates how shifts in such filmic representations have helped to undermine the repressive "closet" metaphor in gay and lesbian life (*Beyond the Closet*, pp. 123–162). One observer of American television commented that "*Will and Grace* has taken the classic four-character sitcom format of *I Love Lucy* and made gay characters an indispensable part of TV Land" (Bob Smith, "From Billy to Willy"). For the contrast between assimilative and multicultural, see chapter 17.

25. *Roots* ran from January 23 to January 30, 1977, on eight consecutive nights, and was watched by some 130 million viewers, the largest audience recorded for a television show up until that time. That same year, the book on which the epochal TV series was based, Haley's autobiographical *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

26. Huff, "Viva!"

27. Wright, *Six Guns and Society*.

28. Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*

29. Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories"; R. Jacobs, "Producing the News"; Herbst, *Reading Public Opinion*, p. 64; Lembo, "Narrative-Based Viewing"; M. Schudson, *Sociology of News*, pp. 177–193.

30. "For many people deeply involved in politics," Susan Herbst reports, "the phenomena of public opinion and mass media are largely conflated" (*Reading Public Opinion*, p. 5).

31. This continuum of flexible responsiveness has been stretched further in recent years by the gradual appearance of new Web-based sources of event-responsiveness, such as blogs. On the one hand, blogs are even more rapid responders than daily news institutions, and thus create a new source of civil mediation. On the other hand, blogs are not informed by professional reporting norms of neutrality. Because they have an overtly personal or ideological character, their constructions of factual reality are less forceful interventions into the civil sphere, even as they constitute a new source of intervening construction.

32. Ronald Jacobs has conducted a series of detailed empirical analyses of how American news media in both white and black communities and in different metropolitan areas have reported on critical events by constructing them in terms of the binary discourse of civil society, and of the repercussions of such representations on powerful elites and institutions. See R. Jacobs, "Civil Society and Crisis" and *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society*.

33. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 181–221. Habermas writes: "The disintegration of the electorate as a public becomes manifest with the realization that press and radio . . . have practically no effect; within the framework of the manufactured public sphere the mass media are useful only as vehicles of advertising" (p. 217). See C. Wright Mills, *Power Elite*; Bourdieu, *On Television* and "Return to Television." For a broad overview of democratic theory and media theory, see Alexander and Jacobs, "Mass Communication, Ritual, and Civil Society."

34. Alexander, "The Mass News Media in Systemic"; Schudson, *Discovering the News*.

35. Describing the origins of commercial media in the American colonial period, Michael Schudson (*The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*) writes that "the newspapers advanced a public discourse [that] helped promote a colonies-wide consciousness." He argues that "the public realm that commercialism and commercial sentiments shape is different from one dominated by political principle or partisan engagement, but it is not necessarily retrograde. The newspapers' neutral space was revolutionary in its own way. That the printers' ambitions were commercial rather than political may have been a critical step in a growing toleration for conflicting points of view" (p. 38). Paul Starr has also documented this positive link between commercial media and civil society in his exhaustive social history, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications*. About the rise of the penny press in the 1820s and 1830s: "Depending entirely on revenue from readers and

advertisers, the publishers of penny papers proclaimed their independence of any political party and represented themselves as the unfettered champions of the public in reporting the news. . . . In their quest for circulation, they became the first papers in the United States to publish extensive coverage of local news” (pp. 132, 134–135). About the origins of mass circulation magazines in the 1890s:

The broadened audience for magazines . . . created the preconditions for the turn toward muckraking in the first decade of the new century. . . . It made sense at least for some magazine publishers to use muckraking as a sensation-creating, circulation-building strategy. In late 1902, when it began publishing Ida Tarbell’s series on John D. Rockefeller’s takeover of the oil industry, *McClure’s* opened a new era in political journalism. . . . S. S. McClure put his investigative writers on long-terms salaries, paying them for their research rather than merely for the copy they produced; Tarbell’s fifteen Standard Oil articles, produced over five years, cost McClure . . . \$4000 each. No publisher could have afforded that investment without the mass circulations then achievable. . . . Muckraking was, therefore, as much a product of the rise of the early mass media as it was a result of the distinct political outlook of the Progressive era. (pp. 260–262)

36. According to Pulitzer Prize-winning media critic David Shaw in “Journalism Is a Very Different Business,” contemporary American journalists speak about “the Wall” “that has traditionally separated the business side of the news and editorial side of a good news organization”:

Journalists can be a bit self-aggrandizing, even self-righteous, at times about their mission as truth-tellers—particularly in contrast with what they regard as the bean counters on the business side. Reporters and editors speak of their “mission” and “sacred trust” and make it sound like some sort of mystic priesthood, with rights and rituals incomprehensible to the nonjournalist.

37. Perhaps the most vivid exemplification of this capacity for the representation of society as such are televised “media events,” the liminal moments in which news media create the sense of “time out of time,” a break from routine programming that represents what is taken to be a dramatic, society changing event. See D. Dayan and E. Katz, *Media Events*.

38. For an analysis of the role that media autonomy, based on professional ethics, played in the construction of a more civil society, see my discussion of the role of northern journalists in the origins of the Civil Rights movement in chapter 12.

39. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part 2, chap. 3, p. 212.

40. Congressman quoted in Schudson, *Good Citizen*, p. 105.

41. Benjamin Franklin quoted in Schudson, *Good Citizen*, p. 34.

42. In other words, whether the putative public is a “mass” or an independent and individuated force is as much a matter of construction via the discourse of civil society as it is of a reality that is independent of cultural coding. This binary construction mass-versus-public also occurs within the world of social theory, where it provides antagonistic narratives about democracy and civil society. It is a critical pivot in arguments about the possibilities for democracy in complex capitalist societies. For the manner in which C. Wright Mills’s insistence on massification justified his exclusive concentration on elite power rather than on civil communication and regulation, see chapter 6 of this book. If, by contrast, the force of public opinion polls is recognized, their civil power can be undermined at a second remove by claiming that the structure, resources, and interpretation of polling are tied to the power and interests of anticivil actors. This is the theoretical logic that informs the arguments employed by such widely different thinkers as, for example, Bourdieu, “L’opinion publique n’existe pas,” and L. Mayhew, *New Public*, e.g., pp. 189–209.

43. Gallup and Rae, *Pulse of Democracy*, p. vi.

44. *Ibid.*, p. vii.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Gallup, *Guide to Public Opinion Polls*, p. 85.

52. Lang and Lang, *Battle for Public Opinion*.

53. Alexander, “Watergate as Democratic Ritual.”

54. See chap. 4, n. 11.

55. On typification as a mode of action connecting micro and macro social worlds, see Alexander, “Action and Its Environments.” The concept of typification was developed by Alfred Schütz in his dialogue with Husserl and Max Weber, in *Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 139–214.

56. Ku, “Boundary Publics in the Public Sphere,” “Revisiting the Notion of ‘Public’ in Habermas’s Theory,” and *Narratives, Politics, and the Public Sphere*.

57. William Drozdiak, “Cresson Meets Enemy: Public Opinion Polls,” *International Herald Tribune*, June 28, 1991, Sec. A, p. 1.

58. Dick Polman, “Public’s Support of War Faltering,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 14, 2005, Sec. A, pp. 1, 18.

59. Sam Dillon, “Mexican Party Reported to Quash Polls Predicting Its Defeat,” *New York Times*, July 17, 2000, Sec. A, p. 9. For a cultural-sociological analysis of the dynamics of the emerging civil sphere in Mexico that draws from and develops

the framework I have been developing here, see Luis Escala-Rabadañ's "The Symbolic Construction of Human Rights Discourse in Mexico's Media, 1978–1996."

60. Hedrick Smith, *New Russians*, pp. 84ff.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 88. After the Soviet Union was dismantled, there ensued a utopian but chaotic and destabilizing period of privatization and democratic experimentation. Standards of living declined, previously unknown men became billionaires overnight, and the Russian military drastically declined in its power and prestige. In this context, it is hardly surprising that polls, often organized by these same institutions, began to crystallize the public's increasingly antidemocratic opinions, registering distrust, low expectations, superstition, hero worship, aggressive feelings toward minorities, and the growing pollution of democracy itself. It was in this symbolic context that Vladimir Putin first rose to the presidency. Placing increasing restraints on Russia's communicative and regulative institutions, Putin was reelected by a landslide vote, and began a campaign to suppress the independence of Russia's noncivil elites. See Richard Pipes, "Flight from Freedom."

62. Majid Al-Haj and Elihu Katz, "Peace: Arab and Jewish Attitudes," *Jerusalem Post*, August 4, 1989, p. 8.

63. This distinction recalls the antithesis between functional and communicative interests that Jürgen Habermas developed in *Theory of Communicative Action*. My approach differs because of the cultural-performative perspective I bring to bear: the critical issue is not whether an organization actually is civil but whether it must enter into the civil sphere to justify its aims and interests. Its ambitions may, in fact, be anticivil, and its discourse may employ highly polluting rhetoric. The issue is not whether speech is really strategic—being really strategic, in Habermas's perspective, means it cannot be truly communicative—but whether actors in the civil sphere must present their strategic interests in terms of an ethical discourse such that the attribution, e.g., of being "Machiavellian," pollutes them and prevents their strategic interests from being realized.

64. See Herbst's study of how congressional staffers relate to public opinion:

Staffers find that the public and public opinion are fairly amorphous entities, and some staffers exhibit a fair degree of impatience with knowledge levels among the general public, so lobbyists seem to them a reasonable and appropriate stand-in for the public. In response to my open-ended question about the meaning of "public," one staffer said: "I immediately think of interest groups. That's how we gauge our public opinion. . . . I rarely am clueless about where that constituency is because of the interest groups keeping me informed. . . . I would have to say that from a public opinion standpoint, we don't really care what the average Joe thinks. I don't say that as if we're not representing them, but we're representing the people who

represent them. It's one step removed from the general public." (*Reading Public Opinion*, p. 53)

Herbst concludes that, for these political elites, "lobbyists are perceived to crystallize or clarify the content of intensity of vague public moods" (p. 53).

65. For a broader theoretical understanding of this specifying and translating of general civil codes, see my discussion of the role that ideological "shifters" play in the construction and destruction of civil power, in chapter 6.

66. Quoted in Skocpol, *Boomerang*, pp. 1 and 116, emphasis added.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5 and 75.

68. *Ibid.*, commentator quoted on p. 10.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 76.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

73. *Ibid.* Though Skocpol's careful empirical analysis supplies the data from which this analysis is drawn, she herself would not agree with the discursive focus and the emphasis on communicative institutions that I present here. She presents, instead, a more "structural" focus, suggesting (1) that the fiscal resources and strategy available to Clinton forced him to offer a complex plan without financial incentives to the middle class and (2) that the nature of civil associations had changed in a manner that made citizen involvement in progressive movements more difficult. "The changing organizational and resource patterns in U.S. politics and society make certain kinds of political communication, mobilization, and alliance formation more or less feasible," she wrote, with the result that "President Clinton's options for explaining his health care reform plan to his fellow citizens . . . were sharply limited by the groups and technologies at work in the contemporary U.S. civic life" (pp. 83–84). For criticism of the kind of state- and resource-centered approach that Skocpol has introduced into the contemporary analysis of politics, see my discussion of the tradition of Thracymachus in chapter 3 and chapter 6.

74. The campaign for the Patient's Bill of Rights was pushed by such issue-oriented civil associations as "Public Citizen." Its Web site (<http://www.citizen.org/>), headlined by the banner "Protecting Health, Safety, and Democracy," justifies the Bill of Rights by polluting health maintenance organizations in strikingly anticivil terms: "When death or serious injury occurs because of an HMO's decision to deny necessary or appropriate medical care, the patient or surviving family members should have the right to go to court to seek redress and the insurer should be held accountable for the consequences of negligent or reckless decisions."

75. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Part II, chaps. 5–7.

76. Durkheim, *Division of Labor in Society*, pp. xxxi–lix.



77. Arendt, *On Revolution*; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 35-43.
78. Kornhauser, *Politics of Mass Society*; C. Wright Mills, *Power Elite*.
79. Banton, "Voluntary Associations."
80. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, p. 363.
81. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, "Bowling Alone," and *Bowling Alone*.
82. Jean Cohen, "Does Voluntary Association Make Democracy Work?" p. 268.
83. This purely associational, CSI emphasis on nonstate groups as, in themselves, carriers of democracy and civil society has also been articulated by contemporary sociologists in the language of networks. Harrison White, for example, speaks of publics as "interstitial social spaces which ease transitions between specific domains [by] decoupling actors from the pattern of specific relations and understandings embedded with[in] any particular domain and network" ("Where Do Languages Come From?" *Pre-Print Series*, Paul F. Lazarsfeld Center for the Social Sciences, Columbia University, 1995, p. 4). Drawing attention to the relevance of this network approach of White, and connecting it more explicitly with the Habermasian idea of deliberative publics, Emirbayer and Sheller define publics as "interstitial networks," or as "open-ended flows of communication that enable socially distant interlocutors to bridge social network positions, formulate collective orientations, and generate psychological 'working alliances,' in pursuit of influence over issues of common concern" ("Publics in History," p. 156.) Despite its technical quality, however, this broad formulation shares the problem common to CSI approaches and, specifically, to the voluntary associations approach to civil association I am discussing here. The approach applies to any communicative process inside any sphere in society, whether economic, religious, ethnic, familial, or governmental, as long as there is mobilization of communication among those who inhabit structural network positions. This definition has, in other words, nothing specifically to do with democratic theory, much less with the discourse codes that inform the kinds of solidarity community that sustain citizenship. It does not, for example, differentiate the kind of publicity that might characterize influential market innovation from civil association.
84. See Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 48. The reference is to Tocqueville's discussion in *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Book II, chap. 5, of how "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all minds are constantly joining together in groups" (p. 595). (This and all following quotations from Tocqueville are from the Goldhammer translation.)
85. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Part II, chap. 5, p. 596.
86. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Part II, chap. 4, p. 216.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 220, emphasis added.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-222.
91. *Ibid.*, chap. 9, pp. 352-353.

92. Robert Gannett makes a complementary argument in his analysis of Tocqueville's discussion of the state's role in America as compared to England, from a draft chapter for *Democracy in America* not included in the published version of Tocqueville's book: "Central governments need not automatically usurp associational incentive or authority, Tocqueville thus argued, provided that they remain mindful of their proper role of giving short-term 'help,' not commanding long-term 'obedience'" ("Bowling Ninepins in Tocqueville's Township," p. 14; emphasis in original). The critical issue for Tocqueville's view of the state, in other words, is whether it was civil in its orientation.

93. Schudson, *Good Citizen*, pp. 48-66.

94. Lipset et al., *Union Democracy*, p. 4.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

97. Sills, *International Encyclopedia*, pp. 368-369.

98. Putnam, "Bowling Alone," p. 32. In the book version of this argument, there is a similarly damaging admission, followed by the introduction of a major residual category that belies the entire thrust of Putnam's argument about the causal line from association to social capital to democracy:

Social capital . . . can be directed toward malevolent, antisocial purposes, just like any other form of capital. . . . Therefore it is important to ask how the positive consequences of social capital—mutual support, cooperation, trust, institutional effectiveness—can be maximized and the negative manifestations—sectarianism, ethnocentrism, corruption—minimized. . . . Of all the dimensions along which forms of social capital vary, perhaps the most important is the distinction between bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive). Some forms of capital are . . . inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities. . . . Other networks are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages. . . . It would obviously be valuable to have distinct measures of the evolution of these various forms of social capital over time. However[,] like researchers on global warming, we must make do with the imperfect evidence that we can find. . . . Exhaustive descriptions of social networks in America . . . do not exist. I have found no reliable, comprehensive, nationwide measures of social capital that neatly distinguish "bridgingness" and "bondingness." In our empirical account of recent trends in this book, therefore, this distinction will be less prominent than I would prefer. (*Bowling Alone*, pp. 22-24)

99. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 125.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 130.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126. As Jean Cohen writes, "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" ("Does Voluntary Association Make Democracy Work?" pp. 269-270). For an extended empirical criticism of Putnam's claims about the consequences of voluntary associations for Italian democracy, see Mabel Berezin's argument that the areas of greatest voluntary organization were also the most likely to become Fascist during the interwar period (M. Berezin, "Uncivil Society: Putnam's 'Italy' and the Other Side of Association," unpublished paper presented at the Conference on the Discourses of Civil Society, University of California at Los Angeles, Center for Modern and Contemporary Studies, June 12, 1998).

102. Schudson, *Good Citizen*, p. 42.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

104. In "Democratic Liberalism and the Challenge of Diversity in Late-Twentieth-Century America," Robert Wuthnow presents empirical data for an alternative reading of shifts in American associations, suggesting that, in complex societies, home and neighborhood have become more "loosely coupled" from work and formal associations, one result of which is that civil associations have a more professionalized, less voluntary staff. Current jeremiads about the supposed decline of such face-to-face groupings and their deleterious effects on democracy, of course, extend considerably beyond Putnam's singular crusade. As I have suggested several times here, such alarmist claims have always been the stock-in-trade of both radical and conservative republican critics of modern societies. In *Democracy on Trial*, for example, J. Elshstain asserts that "it is no longer possible for us to speak to one another," and that "we quite literally inhabit our own little islands of bristling difference where we comport with those just like ourselves." In *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, 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." Both of these conservative proclamations are quoted in Wuthnow, "Democratic Liberalism," p. 20.

105. Putnam, "Bowling Alone," p. 20.

#### CHAPTER 6

1. M. Weber, "Bureaucracy," pp. 214-215.
2. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," "On the Road toward a More Adequate Understanding of the State," and *States and Social Revolutions*.
3. Weber, "Bureaucracy," p. 230. Weber continues: "One has to remember that bureaucracy as such is a precision instrument that can put itself at the disposal of

quite varied—purely political as well as purely economic, or any other sort—interests in domination" (p. 231). It is this proposition that allows Weber to open his theory of modern rationalization to democracy, a process he conceptualizes, however, in its most minimal sense as plebiscitarian caesarism. He developed this connection between his bureaucracy theory and democratic politics in "Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany," esp. pp. 1403-1405 and 1438.

4. It was Weber who first systematically distinguished between economic, political, and symbolic ("status") forms of power in his foundational essay, "Class, Status, and Party." This distinction was elaborated for elite and class theory by such thinkers as C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite* and as a model of "social power" by Mann in *Sources*.

5. For representative analyses, see, e.g., Domhoff, *Who Rules America and Powers That Be*; and Miliband, *State in Capitalist Society*.

6. In addition to the works cited in note 5, see, for example, Michels, *Political Parties*; and Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State" and "The Capitalist State."

7. Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*, p. 36.

8. Crick, *In Defense of Politics*, p. 23.

9. Polsby and Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections*, p. 3.

10. M. Weber, "Class, Status, and Party," p. 194.

11. Michels, *Political Parties*, pp. 65, 70.

12. Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization*, p. 4.

13. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, pp. 303-304.

14. Polsby and Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections*, p. 27.

15. Polsby, "Coalition and Faction in American Politics."

16. Lipset, "Elections: The Expression of the Democratic Class Struggle."

17. The classic text here is Bendix and Lipset, *Class, Status, and Power*, first published in 1953 and subsequently reprinted several times.

18. Lipset, "'Fascism'—Left, Right, and Center," and, partly in response, R. F. Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?*

19. Bell, "Interpretation of American Politics," p. 21.

20. Lipset and Ladd, *Politics of Unreason*, p. 23.

21. Freidland and Alford, "Bringing Society Back In," pp. 421-422.

22. C. Brooks and J. Manza, "Social and Ideological Bases of Middle-Class Political Realignment," pp. 204-205.

23. See nn. 5 and 6, and also Zeitlin, "Corporate Ownership and Control."

24. C. Wright Mills, *Power Elite*, p. 303.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 309, 315.

28. Rokkan et al., *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, p. 143.