

The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation

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This study advances our understanding of “cross-pressures,” a concept recognized in the earliest studies of American voting, but for which empirical evidence and theoretical development has been sorely lacking. Although the current consensus suggests that political cross-pressures are of little, if any, consequence for political participation, I find that people whose networks involve greater political disagreement are less likely to participate in politics. Two social psychological processes are suggested to account for this effect. First, those embedded in cross-cutting social and political networks are, as a consequence, more likely to hold ambivalent political views, which in turn discourage political involvement. Second, social accountability pressures in cross-cutting networks discourage political participation; the inherently controversial nature of politics is perceived to pose threats to the harmony of social relationships.

A venerable tradition of research within social psychological studies of voting behavior emphasizes the problems posed by “cross-pressures” for individuals faced with a voting decision. In early voting research, *The People’s Choice* suggested that conflicts and inconsistencies among the factors influencing an individual’s vote decision discouraged voters from early involvement in the campaign: “Whatever the source of the conflicting pressures, whether from social status or class identification, from voting traditions or the attitudes of associates, the consistent result was to delay the voter’s final decision” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944, 60). *The American Voter* even more directly acknowledged the problem of conflicting considerations surrounding political choices:

The person who experiences some degree of conflict tends to cast his vote for President with substantially less enthusiasm . . . and he is somewhat less likely to vote at all than is the person whose partisan feelings are entirely consistent. [. . .] If attitude conflict leaves its impress on several aspects of behavior it also influences what we will call the individual’s involvement in the election. (Campbell et al. 1960, 83, 85)

Likewise, Hovland and colleagues suggested that the effects of conflicting social influences included “vacillation, apathy, and loss of interest in conflict-laden issues” (1953, 283).

Cross-pressures arising from multiple group affiliations have long been of interest in political sociology as well. Simmel (1955), for example, attributed great significance to the “web of affiliations” and their cross-cutting social relationships that were contrasted with the highly homogeneous kinship-linked groups of an earlier era. Studies of status inconsistency similarly conceived of individuals who were experiencing cross-pressures as under stress (e.g., Hope 1975). Those exposed to a variety of cues about appropriate social and political attitudes were assumed to experience dis-

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comfort as a result, though arguments about how people resolved this discomfort varied.

Interest in testing the cross-pressure hypothesis died out after subsequent analyses repeatedly failed to confirm these early findings. For example, Pool, Abelson, and Popkin (1965) looked for these effects in the 1960 national election data, but to no avail. Moreover, in a re-analysis of data from the 1948 Elmira study and the 1956 national election study, Horan found that even the earlier evidence had resulted from “interpreting direct effects of social positions on nonvoting (and interest) as due to a more complex cross-pressures phenomenon” (Horan 1971, 657). In other words, the investigators had unintentionally confounded the direct effects of membership in social categories with the effects of being linked to *conflicting* social categories. Subsequent studies have differed in terms of the kinds of cross-pressures that were evaluated (e.g., primary group, class-based, and so forth), and whether bivariate or multivariate approaches were used (Jackson and Curtis 1972; Davis 1982), but despite a promising beginning, by the late 1970s studies of cross-pressures had largely disappeared due to an accumulation of negative evidence (see Knoke 1990, for a review). As Horan summarized, the theory of political cross-pressures became part of “that category of plausible theories whose empirical support has been cut out from under them” (1971, 659).

In the early studies, measurement of whether a person was experiencing cross-pressures was typically accomplished using social category memberships such as the fact that a person was both white collar and Catholic, for example. Conflicts were defined purely at the level of social categories deemed *potentially* conflictual by the researchers. Actual interactions that might exert pressure on people were not documented even though interaction was generally the micro-level process assumed to be responsible for producing cross-pressures. Today several data sets that include batteries of items on individuals’ political networks make it possible to test this hypothesis in a manner that allows measurement of actual (as opposed to inferred) exposure to cross-pressures and in a manner that allows insight into potential *processes* of influence.

Social Context, Networks, and Participation

Despite the prominence of this concept in early voting research, the “theory of political cross-pressures’ is in fact a rather mixed bag of propositions and assumptions”

(Horan 1971, 659). Most versions are in agreement with the assumption that “social interaction is the primary mechanism linking social group membership and individual political behavior,” (1971, 650) but beyond this, understandings of the term vary. For example, the emphasis in many studies of cross-pressures has been on how people sort out their *opinions* in the face of conflicting social pressures rather than on how such exposure alters their political participation. As Horan (1971) explains, because this theory evolved gradually from analysis and interpretation of data, it has often lacked clarity as an abstract theoretical formulation. In this study I attempt to remedy this problem by focusing specifically on developing theory and evidence relevant to the effects of conflicting social influences on political participation.

In one sense, the link between the composition of people’s social environments and political participation has already been widely acknowledged. For example, studies of social context and social networks already have converged on a strong consensus that political activity is rooted in social structure. But for the most part this conclusion refers to the idea that highly participative social contexts and active social networks further enhance the prospects for an individual’s political participation. Mobilization via social networks has been recognized as one of the major factors underlying turnout (e.g., Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). In addition, the extent of participation within the immediate social environment has been found to have significant consequences for the likelihood of individual participation (e.g., Huckfeldt 1979, 1986; Giles and Dantico 1982), although it remains unclear whether social environment affects all or only some particular kinds of participatory acts (see Kenny 1992; Leighley 1990).

Whether these studies are based on aggregated contextual measures of social environment or measures of an individual’s immediate social network, the general conclusion is that a participatory social environment begets still more participation, and the mechanism assumed to account for this effect is the same in both cases; that is, the more people interact with one another within a social context, the more norms of participation will be transmitted, and the more people will be recruited into political activity.

To be sure, social context appears to make a difference in the extent to which individuals become politically active, but does the homogeneity of political beliefs within the social environment also have consequences for political participation? Some scholars have theorized that people may be more likely to participate if their social

environment is consistent with their political beliefs (e.g., Leighley 1990; cf. Oliver 1999),¹ but the kind of data most appropriate to testing this hypothesis have been in short supply.

Potential Mechanisms of Influence

In order to avoid confusion with the many different formulations of the original cross-pressure hypothesis, I use the term *cross-cutting networks* and refer to the extent of *cross-cutting exposure* taking place within them. In this study I focus on developing a theory to explain the *process* by which social interactions that cross lines of political difference might affect political participation. Assuming for the moment that cross-cutting exposure does, in fact, discourage participation, there are at least two potential social psychological mechanisms that might explain such an effect.

Political Ambivalence

First, political inaction could be induced by the attitudinal ambivalence that cross-cutting exposure is likely to engender within an individual. If citizens are embedded in networks that do not reinforce their viewpoints, but instead tend to supply them with political information that challenges their views, then such cross-cutting exposure could make people uncertain of their own positions with respect to issues or candidates, and make them less likely to take political action as a result. In this case it is *intrapersonal* conflict that drives the effect, and the chain of events is one in which cross-cutting exposure leads to ambivalence which, in turn, reduces political participation.

A relatively recent resurgence of interest in ambivalence—that is, the simultaneous presence of both positive and negative considerations directed toward the same attitude object—has been noted in both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding political attitudes. For example, in her in-depth interviews with Americans, Hochschild (1981, 1993) noted a tremendous

amount of vacillation and uncertainty in people's views, most of which appeared to be driven by competing values and considerations as applied to political questions rather than from a lack of political expertise. Likewise, efforts to better understand responses to survey questions have suggested that citizens' opinions are comprised of competing ideas and considerations (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Zaller 1992), and that, as a result, ambivalence is often difficult to distinguish from nonattitudes as typically measured (see also, Alvarez and Brehm 1995, 1997). In studies of issues ranging from race to abortion, ambivalence has been found to play an important part in the formation of citizens' attitudes. The consequences of political ambivalence have been less widely explored, although they appear to include more moderate political positions, less certainty in political judgments (Guge and Meffert 1998), delayed formation of voting intentions, and instability in candidate evaluations (Lavine 2001).

Ambivalence also has been tied to having more balanced or even-handed judgments about political issues (e.g., Sniderman 1981; Guge and Meffert 1998). For example, simultaneous awareness of conflicting considerations bearing on a given issue can lead to higher levels of integrational complexity (see Green, Visser, and Tetlock 2000), which is similar to what others call "balanced judgment"; that is, an awareness that many political questions are not black and white, and a recognition that there is something to be said for "the other side" (Sniderman 1981). This condition is distinct from having a middle-of-the-road position or no position at all, although the typical approach to the measurement of political attitudes makes such distinctions difficult to observe.

Social Accountability

The second possible reason that cross-cutting political networks would discourage political participation is because cross-cutting networks create the need to be accountable to conflicting constituencies. According to this social psychological mechanism, the problem is not that one is *internally* conflicted over which side to support, but rather that one feels uncomfortable taking sides in the face of multiple competing constituencies. The need for social accountability creates anxiety because interpersonal disagreement threatens social relationships, and there is no way to please all members of one's network and thus assure social harmony. As Green, Visser, and Tetlock suggest, "The decision maker is caught in the middle, pushed one way by part of the group, and pulled the other way by an opposing faction. The individual is forced to defend a position in what may be perceived as a 'no win' situation, in which one side will inevitably be

¹ Leighley (1990), for example, operationalizes exposure to conflict in one's personal network as respondents' reports of whether a friend has tried to convince him/her to vote for a candidate of the opposite party, and finds, contrary to her hypothesis, that conflict enhances participation. In contrast to Leighley's hypothesis, Oliver (1999) suggests that economic diversity in cities should produce competition and greater conflict over resources and that macro-level conflict should encourage participation. His analyses suggest that this is only true for participation in local politics, and the results do not speak directly to the question of cross-pressures.

alienated" (2000, 4). If this mechanism alone were at work, we would expect mainly public forms of political participation to be affected; in private situations such as the voting booth, cross-cutting networks should pose few problems due to social accountability.

Qualitative evidence in support of the idea that people avoid politics as a means of maintaining interpersonal social harmony has been around for some time. In the mid 1950s, Rosenberg (1954–55), noted in his in-depth interviews that the threat to interpersonal harmony was a significant deterrent to political activity. More recent case studies have provided further support for this thesis. In her study of New England town meetings and an alternative workplace, Mansbridge (1980) similarly observed that conflict avoidance was an important deterrent to political participation (see also Eliasoph 1998). In their focus group discussions, Conover and Searing (1998) also found considerable evidence that people were both aware of and wary of the risks of political discussion for interpersonal relationships. As one of their focus group participants put it, "It's not worth it ... to try and have an open discussion if it gets them [other citizens] upset" (1998, 25).

Verba and Nie (1972) applied a similar logic to their analysis of political participation in which activities were differentiated not only on the basis of the extent of initiative required, and the scope of the outcome, but also on the extent to which conflict with others was involved. Moreover, in a recent analysis of national survey data, Ulbig and Funk (1999) found that individual differences in conflict avoidance were negatively related to political participation of some kinds, particularly more public participatory acts such as protesting, working on a campaign, and political discussion.²

The idea that conflict avoidance discourages participation is also consistent with social psychological research on how people handle nonpolitical interpersonal disagreements. When a person confronted with a difference of opinion does not shift to the other person's views or persuade them to adopt his or her own views, the most likely alternative reaction is to devalue the issue itself (e.g.,

Steiner 1966). By devaluing politics and avoiding political controversy, people effectively resolve the problem. In a recent experiment manipulating exposure to arguments on opposite sides of an issue, as well as whether subjects were accountable to conflicting or unified constituencies, Green, Visser, and Tetlock (2000) found that cross-pressured subjects engaged in many decision-evasion tactics (including buckpassing, procrastination, and exiting the situation) in order to avoid accountability to contradictory constituencies. If we generalize these findings outside the laboratory, we would expect those with high levels of cross-cutting exposure in their personal networks to put off political decisions as long as possible or altogether, thus making their political participation particularly unlikely.

In the analyses that follow, I first examine to what extent cross-cutting exposure within social networks does, in fact, have adverse implications for political participation of various kinds. Second, I evaluate the extent to which these two proposed processes of influence—*intrapersonal ambivalence* and *interpersonal social accountability*—account for the overall impact of network diversity on political participation.

Data and Methods

To investigate these questions, I drew on two representative national surveys, both including large batteries of measures tapping characteristics of respondents' political networks. The first survey was supported by the Spencer Foundation and executed by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center in the fall of 1996, immediately preceding the presidential election in November (see Appendix A).

This telephone interview included a battery of items addressing the frequency with which respondents talked about politics with up to three political discussants, plus five separate items assessing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the views of each of the political discussants that were named. These five measures per discussant were combined into an additive scale representing the extent to which people's networks exposed them to views unlike their own.³ In total the sample included 780 respondents providing information on over 1700 of their discussion partners, thus providing tremendous depth of information about the extent of exposure to political disagreement in personal networks.

³Cronbach's alpha indicated that these five items scaled relatively well, with alphas of .78, .81, and .81 for the first, second and third named discussants, respectively.

²Research on the "spiral of silence" similarly contends that perceived minority status will affect political preferences by discouraging the expression of political viewpoints that are perceived to be unpopular (Noelle-Neumann 1974). However, in this case political discussion is the dependent, rather than the independent variable. But if one considers discussion as a form of political participation, the spiral of silence can be interpreted as suggesting that fear of interpersonal conflict inhibits participation, as also shown by Ulbig and Funk (1999). Nonetheless, the hypothesis that perceived support for one's opinions in the broader political environment relates to willingness to speak out publicly has received very limited support to date (see Glynn, Hayes, and Shanahan 1997).

Moreover, because this survey included multiple indicators of the independent variable for each discussant, it was possible to create a reliable measure of the extent to which a person's political network included exposure to oppositional views, a measure that assessed the extent to which a source provided dissonant contact independent of the frequency of that contact.

It should be noted that this kind of measure is very different from what has typically been used in studies of cross-pressures where group memberships are used as the basis for inferring that cross-cutting contact has occurred. It is a huge operational leap from knowing that a person is both Catholic and a businessman, for example, to infer that they are subject to political cross-pressures from pro-Democratic Catholic acquaintances and pro-Republican business people. It is far less of a leap when that same person names the members of those groups as part of his immediate network. But even knowing the political characteristics of those in one's network does not ensure that cross-cutting contact has occurred. For this reason, the measures used in this study also take into account the frequency of political discussion with each discussant. Even if one's network includes people with differing political viewpoints, it is difficult to argue that cross-pressures are at work if politics is hardly ever discussed.

These data were supplemented with data from the American component of the Cross-National Election Project (CNEP), a telephone survey executed during the 1992 elections (see Appendix B).⁴ The CNEP data provided an item measuring the extent of exposure to disagreement (based on choice of presidential candidate) for each of up to five discussants.⁵ The other major difference between the Spencer and CNEP surveys was that the CNEP questionnaire used a discussant generator which asked respondents to volunteer the names of people with whom they discussed "important matters" for the first four discussants, while the Spencer survey asked explicitly about people with whom respondents talked about "government, elections and politics."⁶ For the fifth discussant in the CNEP questionnaire, respondents were asked with

⁴See Beck, Dalton, and Huckfeldt (1992) for details.

⁵Although the CNEP data also included an item tapping the frequency of disagreement with the discussant *if* they had talked about politics, because the discussant generator asked for "important matters" discussants, respondents were not asked this question about a large proportion of the discussants who did not claim to talk politics. In order to avoid losing a large proportion of respondents due to missing data, I did not include this measure in the operationalization of cross-cutting exposure for the CNEP sample.

⁶If a respondent in the Spencer survey was unable to name a political discussant, they were then asked about an "important matters" discussant.

whom they talked most "about the events of the recent presidential election campaign," thus generating a more explicitly political discussion partner. Previous comparisons of name generators suggest that the explicitly political frame will produce more nonrelatives and discussants who are weak ties (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995b), thus making the Spencer survey more likely to generate discussants who will be politically dissimilar to the main respondents.

The two surveys complemented one another well for these purposes. The Spencer survey provided extensive information on exposure to oppositional political views and some variables useful for pinning down mechanisms of influence, while providing more limited information on political participation. The CNEP study, in contrast, included more participation measures plus a question addressing time of presidential vote decision, but it incorporated less information on exposure to political difference within the respondent's network. Unquestionably, both surveys represent an improvement in the operationalization of cross-pressures relative to the traditional approach that simply assumes cross-cutting exposure based on membership in combinations of particular religious, economic, occupational, age, or racial categories that may (or may not) be central to an individual's social network, that may (or may not) represent oppositional political perspectives, and that may (or may not) exert cross-pressures on respondents through political communication.

In general, the extent of accuracy in respondents' self-reports on the political leanings of political discussants is relatively high (see, e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995a).⁷ Moreover, because the CNEP data included independent reports of candidate choice by the discussants themselves which have been analyzed in other studies, the extent of projection in respondents' perceptions is known. Only 12 percent of the respondent-discussant dyads showed potential evidence of projection of the respondents' political views onto the discussant, and a full 78 percent of respondents' perceptions were accurate reports of the discussants' views; the remaining 9 percent were situations in which perceptual errors were made in the direction of a candidate *other* than the respondent's favored one (Mutz and Martin 2001). Only 8 percent of dyads involved perceptual errors in which the respondent preferred one candidate and erroneously claimed that

⁷Although respondents are likely to perceive somewhat greater agreement in their networks than actually exists, it is their *perceptions* of their discussants that should shape their tendency to engage or withdraw politically. For this reason perceptual measures are preferable to assessments drawn from the perspectives of discussants, which may be subject to inaccuracies as well.

the discussant preferred the same one. The remaining 4 percent (of the 12 percent mentioned above) were cases in which a neutral discussant was erroneously perceived to favor the respondent's own candidate.

Despite these high levels of accuracy in respondent perceptions, some might consider the discussants' reports superior to those provided by the respondents. However, for purposes of operationalizing social influences on the respondent, it makes little sense to argue that discussants' views will influence the respondent even when these views have not been clearly communicated. Although the choice of measure should make little difference in these particular data, it makes more theoretical sense to argue that respondents will experience cross-pressures to the extent that they recognize that their network members hold differing political views.

The discussion of results proceeds by first analyzing findings pertaining to the general question of whether cross-cutting networks have implications for political participation. I break down the characteristics of networks into three separate variables representing their size, frequency of political discussion, and degree of heterogeneity. Next, I evaluate the two potential social psychological explanations for this relationship. Toward that end I disaggregate the six participation items in the CNEP survey into those that do or do not involve direct confrontation with those of opposing views.⁸ As Verba and Nie (1972) have suggested, activities that involve public expression are more likely to engender conflict, but it is not the fact that the act is performed with others present that is crucial so much as whether one must confront those of *oppositional* views, with all the potential social awkwardness of such encounters.

To examine the role of ambivalence, I created measures using a modification of Griffin's formula, a preferable measure of ambivalence because it simultaneously considers both the *dissimilarity* and *intensity* of attitudes

⁸Although these items have been disaggregated a number of ways in the past—particularly based on individual versus socially based participation—here the criterion was whether performing the act generally necessitates face-to-face contact *with those of differing views*, rather than whether it requires getting together with others. For example, attending a fundraiser or rally for a candidate is clearly social, but it involves contact almost exclusively with like-minded individuals attending the same function and thus does not require a willingness to confront people with differing views. Giving money to candidates can also easily be accomplished without confrontation, even though such records are technically public. In contrast, trying to persuade someone else to one's own viewpoint and actively working to support a particular candidate require the individual to make it known to potentially unsupportive others that this is one's preference. Thus these two items—persuasion and working for a candidate—were classified as potentially confrontational, while putting up a sign, giving money, and attending a meeting were considered largely nonconfrontational.

(see Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin 1995; also Breckler 1994).⁹ When applied to choice of presidential candidate, this formula takes into account the overall intensity of feelings toward the candidates, corrected by the extent to which the valence of respondents' reactions to the candidates differ. Using this measure, ambivalence decreases as a function of increasing differentiation between the candidates and increases as a function of the average intensity of feelings toward them. The advantage of Griffin's formula over measures that simply take the absolute value of the difference in evaluations is that it assigns those who are highly ambivalent (such as people who rate both candidates as 90s on a candidate-feeling thermometer) a different score from those who are simply indifferent as to their choice of candidate (such as when two candidates are both rated a neutral 50). With this operational measure, high-intensity feelings with highly similar ratings quite logically produce the greatest ambivalence scores.

To examine the importance of social accountability, the Spencer survey included a battery of items tapping people's reluctance to involve themselves in face-to-face conflict (see Appendix A).¹⁰ This index allowed for more direct assessment of the extent to which conflict avoidance facilitates the effects of cross-cutting exposure.

Findings

Using both the CNEP and Spencer surveys, Table 1 summarizes the relationship between cross-cutting exposure and the likelihood of participation, after controlling for political interest, strength of partisanship, and a host of other variables. As shown in the first two columns of Table 1, the likelihood of voting in presidential and congressional elections is a function of the usual predictors

⁹The formula used to tap both the intensity and dissimilarity of views was adapted to the case of a three-candidate race as follows: $A = I - D$

Where A = ambivalence;

I = absolute value of average intensity of feeling for the two most preferred candidates;

D = absolute value of differentiation among the two most preferred candidates.

In the case of feeling thermometers in which 5 represents the lowest intensity of feeling, this translates to:

$$A = ((\text{abs}(5 - \text{candidate A rating}) + \text{abs}(5 - \text{candidate B rating}))/2) - \text{abs}(\text{candidate A} - \text{candidate B}).$$

¹⁰The alpha for these for four items was .60, and the scale was then dichotomized to increase reliability and facilitate tests for interactive effects.

TABLE 1 Effects of Network Composition on Political Participation

	CNEP '92				Spencer '96
	Pres. Voting '92 & '88	Congressional Voting	Participation Index	Lateness of Decision (Presidential)	Intent to Vote '96
Network Characteristics					
Cross-cutting exposure	-.36** (2.83)	-.40** (3.00)	-.21* (1.99)	.62*** (5.54)	-.25** (2.98)
Frequency of political talk	.18* (2.46)	.22** (2.82)	.37*** (5.68)	-.09 (1.33)	.05 (.44)
Size of network	.05 (1.62)	.03 (.89)	.14*** (5.10)	.01 (.47)	.31*** (3.67)
Control Variables					
Political interest	.29*** (4.49)	.24** (3.42)	.30*** (5.02)	.04 (.62)	.34*** (4.50)
Education	.25*** (6.74)	.10* (2.51)	.10** (2.94)	-.05 (1.37)	.15* (2.14)
Republican (strength of)	.29*** (4.98)	.21** (3.45)	.11* (2.41)	-.28*** (5.67)	.26** (3.44)
Democrat (strength of)	.03 (.49)	.13* (2.28)	.18*** (3.87)	-.23*** (4.54)	.29*** (3.86)
Age	.03*** (12.01)	.02*** (5.57)	-.00 (1.95)	-.01* (2.56)	.01* (2.23)
Income	.09** (3.11)	.06 (1.93)	.01 (.31)	-.02 (.90)	.03 (.51)
Race (white)	.01 (.13)	.09 (.74)	-.00 (.05)	-.15 (1.32)	.30 (1.73)
Gender (female)	.00 (.02)	-.08 (.91)	-.21** (3.06)	.05 (.68)	.29* (2.03)
Political knowledge					.15** (2.76)
Minor children					-.09 (.65)
Cutpoint 1	2.23 (.39)	1.43 (.41)	1.86 (.34)	-1.00 (.38)	2.92 (.39)
Cutpoint 2	3.23 (.39)		2.89 (.34)	-.22 (.38)	
Cutpoint 3		3.51 (.35)	.60 (.38)		
Cutpoint 4		4.00 (.35)			
Cutpoint 5		4.45 (.36)			
Sample size	1091	1091	1091	869	679
Initial log-likelihood	-983.52	-649.28	-1425.19	-1187.61	-359.81
Final log-likelihood	-799.27	-577.25	-1315.47	-1134.19	-239.53
Chi ²	368.50	144.06	219.45	106.86	240.56

Note: Entries are coefficients from five ordered probit analyses with z-values in parentheses.

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

such as political interest, strong partisanship, education, and frequency of political discussion. But there is also a sizable and significant negative influence that stems from exposure to conflicting political views in one's personal

network. Having friends and associates of differing political views makes it less likely that a person will vote.

The third column of Table 1 uses an index of six participation items (similar to the American National Elec-

tion Studies participation battery) as its dependent variable and here, again, cross-cutting exposure is negatively related to participation, while a high frequency of talk and large network size encourage recruitment into activities such as donating money to candidates and putting up signs.

In the fourth column I examine the effects of network characteristics on the timing of presidential voting decisions, measured using a four-point scale. The large positive coefficient corresponding to cross-cutting exposure indicates that exposure to dissonant views encourages people to make up their minds later in the campaign. This, in turn, limits their opportunities to participate in an actively partisan fashion during the campaign. Although this measure does not directly tap participation, it seems inevitable that the later one makes up his or her mind, the less time there is for actively promoting one's political preferences. Finally, in the fifth column of Table 1, I show that intent to vote in the 1996 presidential election also was negatively related to cross-cutting exposure. Even employing the more stringent controls included in this survey such as political knowledge in addition to political interest, cross-cutting exposure still exerts a negative influence on the likelihood of voting.

Drawing on every available indicator of political participation across these two surveys, the findings are extremely consistent: cross-cutting exposure appears to discourage political participation. This pattern of findings is extremely robust even when using two different surveys with slightly different operationalizations of network composition and participation. Nonetheless, given that these are cross-sectional data, it is important to consider the possibility of reverse causation. In column 3 of Table 1, it is plausible that participating in political activities could *lead* one to associate with a more politically homogeneous group of contacts, thus political participation could cause lower levels of cross-cutting exposure rather than vice-versa. When one brings to mind highly social participatory acts such as working on a campaign together or attending a fundraiser, it is relatively easy to entertain this possibility; through these kinds of events, one would make more like-minded friends and acquaintances. But for the remaining four columns of equally supportive results, reverse causation makes no theoretical sense. The act of voting or of making up one's mind does not locate a person in a social environment more conducive to like-minded views, thus the bulk of evidence supports the proposed direction of causality.

It is also important to consider potential spuriousness in the relationship between cross-cutting exposure and participation. Those with high levels of political interest and/or strongly partisan views might, as a result, be

more likely to participate *and* be more likely to actively construct politically congenial social networks. Thus network diversity would go hand in hand with lower levels of participation for spurious reasons. However, in all columns of Table 1, controls are included for political interest, strength of partisanship, and, with the Spencer data, for political knowledge as well. It is still possible that some latent, unmeasured factor causes both low levels of political participation and heterogeneous social networks. But most of the likely suspects work against such a relationship. For example, being a member of the workforce makes it more likely that a person will be politically active (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995), but it also exposes people to many cross-cutting political discussions (Mutz and Mondak 1998), thus it should produce a positive rather than a negative spurious association. Nonetheless, to investigate this possibility, additional analyses were conducted utilizing Achen's (1986) technique for modeling selection effects in quasi-experiments. Two-stage analyses (not shown here) were used to model separately respondents' selection into political heterogeneous networks and the effects of heterogeneous networks on participation. Results provided little support for a spurious interpretation of the results in Table 1, though weak first-stage equations limited the conclusiveness of these findings.¹¹

Processes of Influence

This pattern of findings, in itself, tells us little about the nature of the social psychological processes underlying this effect. To better understand the extent to which ambivalence and/or social accountability may be driving these patterns, I first compared the confrontational and nonconfrontational components of the participation index summarized in column 3 of Table 1. If social accountability pressure is, at least in part, driving this overall effect, then we would expect to see stronger effects for cross-cutting exposure on confrontational forms of participation and weaker effects for forms of participation that do not require face to face confrontation. As shown in Table 2, the overall effect does appear to be driven primarily by the confrontational measures, although the two coefficients are not significantly different from one

¹¹The extent of cross-cutting exposure which served as the dependent variable in the first stage regressions proved extremely difficult to predict even when drawing on a large number of exogenous variables. It is unrelated to standard demographic variables, although it is significantly associated with being in the workforce and with having a family of origin in which the parents identified with different political parties.

TABLE 2 Effects of Network Composition on Confrontational and Non-confrontational Forms of Participation

	Confrontational Participation	Non-confrontational Participation
Network Characteristics		
Cross-cutting exposure	-.25* (2.16)	-.15 (1.24)
Frequency of political talk	.38*** (5.10)	.32*** (4.38)
Size of network	.17*** (5.39)	.08* (2.43)
Control Variables		
Political interest	.33*** (4.85)	.21** (3.04)
Education	.05* (1.43)	.11** (2.98)
Republican (strength of)	.08 (1.62)	.09 (1.76)
Democrat (strength of)	.12* (2.46)	.18*** (3.49)
Age	-.01*** (.00)	.00 (.00)
Income	.02 (.65)	.01 (.44)
Race (white)	-.15 (1.30)	.09 (.76)
Gender (female)	-.19* (2.52)	-.18* (2.25)
Cutpoint 1 (se)	1.67 (.37)	2.60 (.39)
Cutpoint 2 (se)	3.56 (.39)	3.44 (.40)
Cutpoint 3 (se)		4.06 (.40)
Initial log-likelihood	-886.68	-964.50
Final log-likelihood	-787.08	-906.16
Chi ²	199.20	116.69
sample size	1091	1086

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients with z-values in parentheses.
 ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

another. Because these activities are also somewhat vague with respect to whether they require people to publicly acknowledge their political views in front of potentially unsupportive members of the network, this does not provide an ideal test of this hypothesis.

A second, more direct, way to get some sense of the relative contributions made by ambivalence and social accountability is to introduce a measure of ambivalence and observe the extent to which it accounts for the effects of cross-cutting exposure. In Table 3, I show the same equations as in Table 1, but with the addition of measures of ambivalence toward choice of presidential candidate.¹²

As shown in Table 3, when ambivalence is added to the equation, it is a consistently significant negative predictor of participation in the direction that would be expected; the more ambivalent one is about the candidates, the less likely one is to participate in the campaign in any of a variety of fashions, and the later one is likely to make up his or her mind. Nonetheless, even with the addition of this new variable, cross-cutting exposure remains a significant negative predictor of participation for two of the four measures, and in the first two columns, the coefficients for cross-cutting exposure slip just to the other side of the p<.05 cut-off (p<.10). The addition of ambivalence measures to these equations does not entirely wipe out the effects of cross-cutting exposure by any means. Table 4 makes it easier to assess the changes in the size of these coefficients by showing the appropriate comparisons of the size of coefficients from the full equations before and after the introduction of ambivalence. In all four comparisons, the coefficient corresponding to cross-cutting exposure declines, as would be expected. But in most cases the reduction in the size of this coefficient is relatively slight, thus suggesting that intrapersonal conflict is, at best, only a partial explanation for the effects of cross-cutting exposure.

This pattern provides evidence, albeit indirect, that social accountability is probably at work as well as ambivalence in translating cross-cutting exposure to political inaction. Ambivalence does not eradicate the effects of cross-cutting exposure, and this lends support to the idea that social accountability also matters. However, subtractive logic is a weak basis on which to build a case for the idea that social accountability hampers participation (i.e., if it is not ambivalence, then it must be accountability). Thus I attempt to evaluate this process more directly by setting up two tests that ought to work only if social accountability is a relevant factor in discouraging participation.

In Table 5 I utilize an index available in the Spencer survey tapping individual differences in conflict avoid-

¹²Because ambivalence with respect to congressional candidates was not available, I omit this dependent variable from Table 3; likewise, there is no reason to expect presidential voting in both 1992 and 1988 to be driven by ambivalence toward presidential candidates in 1992, so I use strictly presidential voting in 1992 as the dependent variable in this equation.

TABLE 3 Effects of Network Composition on Political Participation, Controlling for Ambivalence

	Pres. Voting in 1992	Confrontational Index	Lateness of Decision (Presidential)	Intent to Vote '96
Network Characteristics				
Cross-cutting exposure	-.26 [#] (1.63)	-.20 [#] (1.74)	.46 ^{***} (4.07)	-.21* (2.51)
Frequency of political talk	.28 ^{**} (3.26)	.36 ^{***} (4.88)	-.05 (.72)	.01 (.12)
Size of network	.05 (1.30)	.17 (5.50)	-.00 (.02)	.31 ^{***} (3.54)
Ambivalence				
Ambivalence toward presidential candidates	-.08 ^{**} (3.02)	-.05* (2.42)	.20 ^{**} (9.21)	-.09 ^{**} (2.67)
Control Variables				
Political interest	.32 ^{***} (4.10)	.33 ^{**} (4.89)	.04 (.57)	.36 ^{***} (4.59)
Education	.22 ^{***} (4.68)	.05 (1.36)	-.04 (1.07)	.17* (2.35)
Republican (strength of)	.16* (2.26)	.08 (1.51)	-.30 ^{***} (5.92)	.23 ^{**} (2.80)
Democrat (strength of)	-.01 (.23)	.11* (2.22)	-.21 ^{***} (4.13)	.24 ^{**} (3.08)
Age	.02 ^{***} (7.39)	-.01 ^{***} (4.83)	-.01* (2.40)	.01 (1.82)
Income	.07* (2.17)	.02 (.79)	-.04 (1.45)	.03 (.53)
Race (white)	.06 (.44)	-.15 (1.34)	-.10 (.82)	.37* (2.03)
Gender (female)	-.06 (.55)	-.22 ^{**} (2.79)	.13 (1.67)	.30* (2.06)
Minor children				-.10 (.70)
Political knowledge				.17 ^{**} (3.02)
Cutpoint 1	2.51 (.47)	1.75(.38)	-1.40 (.39)	3.10 (.40)
Cutpoint 2		3.65 (.39)	-.58 (.39)	
Cutpoint 3			.30 (.39)	
Sample size	1086	1086	866	662
Initial log-likelihood	-533.31	-883.68	-1183.73	-344.15
Final log-likelihood	-427.74	-782.13	-1086.69	-225.84
Chi ²	211.14	203.11	194.08	236.61

Note: Entries are coefficients from four ordered probit analyses with z-values in parentheses. First three columns draw on data from the 1992 CNEP study. The last column is from the 1996 Spencer Survey.

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, #p<.10.

TABLE 4 Summary of Effects from Cross-Cutting Exposure With and Without Ambivalence Controlled, by Type of Participation

	No Control	With Ambivalence Added
Type of Participation		
Voted in '92 Presidential Election	-.32* (2.07)	-.26# (1.63)
Confrontational Index	-.25* (3.67)	-.20# (1.74)
Lateness of Decision in '92	.62*** (5.54)	.46*** (4.07)
Intent to Vote in '96	-.25** (2.98)	-.21* (2.48)

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients with z-values shown in parentheses. Coefficients are drawn from separate equations including all of the same controls used in all other tables.

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, #p<.10.

ance; that is, people's reluctance to involve themselves in controversial political discussions.¹³ If social accountability is part of what drives cross-cutting exposure's discouraging effects on participation, then we would expect to see such effects in greater magnitude among those who have a greater individual tendency to avoid face-to-face conflict. Moreover, if both ambivalence and social accountability are taken into account in a single equation, one would expect to see the effects of cross-cutting exposure disappear entirely unless yet another mechanism is at work. Because both ambivalence and conflict avoidance are available only for one of the participation variables in the two data sets, I am limited to one opportunity to test the comprehensiveness of these two explanations.

The equation shown in the first column of Table 5 illustrates the effects of ambivalence and cross-cutting exposure on intent to vote. These coefficients can be compared with the same equation in column 2 when an interaction between conflict avoidance and cross-cutting exposure is included along with the main effects of both. Two things pertaining to the additional impact of cross-cutting exposure among the conflict avoidant should be noted in the second column of Table 5. First, there is a sizable negative influence from cross-cutting exposure among the conflict-avoidant, just as the social accountability mechanism would predict. Second, the size of the coefficient for cross-cutting exposure diminishes to

¹³The conflict avoidance measure is based on an index of four questions (see Appendix A), which was dichotomized at the median into a measure of low (0) and high (1) levels of conflict avoidance.

TABLE 5 Additional Influence of Cross-Cutting Exposure on Participation Among the Conflict-Avoidant

	Intent to Vote '96	Intent to Vote '96 With Interaction
Network Characteristics		
Cross-cutting exposure	-.21* (2.51)	-.04 (.36)
Frequency of political talk	.01 (.12)	.02 (.18)
Size of network	.31*** (3.54)	.31*** (3.55)
Ambivalence		
Ambivalence toward Presidential candidates	-.09** (2.67)	-.08* (2.51)
Social Accountability		
Conflict avoidant		.11 (.76)
Conflict avoidant x Cross-cutting Exposure		-.35* (2.09)
Control Variables		
Political knowledge	.17** (3.02)	.17** (3.03)
Political interest	.36*** (4.59)	.36*** (4.56)
Education	.17* (2.35)	.18* (2.38)
Republican (strength of)	.23** (2.80)	.24** (2.92)
Democrat (strength of)	.24** (3.08)	.26** (3.21)
Age	.01 (1.82)	.01 (1.85)
Income	.03 (.53)	.03 (.56)
Race (white)	.37* (2.03)	.35 (1.92)
Female (female)	.30* (2.06)	.29* (1.99)
Minor children	-.10 (.70)	-.09 (.65)
Cutpoint 1 (se)	3.10 (.40)	3.20 (.42)
Initial log-likelihood	-344.15	-344.15
Final log-likelihood	-225.84	-223.56
Chi ²	236.61	241.17
sample size	662	662

Note: Entries are probit coefficients with z-values in parentheses. Data are from the 1996 Spencer survey.

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

virtually zero when controlling for both ambivalence and social accountability effects. In other words, collectively these two theories do a good job of accounting for the sum total of effects stemming from cross-cutting exposure.

In considering this collection of findings as a whole, one surprising pattern of results is that the size and strength of effects from cross-cutting exposure appear to be independent of whether the political act itself is private, as is the act of voting, as opposed to more public types of political acts. One might think that interpersonal social forces (as opposed to cognitive factors) would be relatively benign when considering private acts, but this does not appear to be the case in these results, nor has it been so in previous studies. Likewise, in Table 5, social accountability appears to matter for intent to vote as well as for more public acts. Previous studies of the effects of social context on voting behavior have similarly suggested that social context influences both individual and social forms of participation. As Kenny (1992) has suggested, this is probably because the events leading up to the participation are socially structured even when the act itself is performed in isolation.

On the other hand, when asking someone *if* they voted, whether in surveys or day-to-day life, this is most often followed by the obvious question of *for whom* they voted. If such a question is posed by a coworker or a survey interviewer, it is almost always followed by a question asking one to reveal one's preferences. Assuming there are no costs involved in misrepresenting one's choices, social accountability should have no bearing. But being cornered into a situation in which one is even tempted to lie is stressful for most people, and thus it is easier to deny or avoid participation altogether rather than risk the pressure of social accountability.

Table 6 provides some support for this interpretation. As shown in the first two columns of Table 6, cross-cutting exposure significantly predicts ambivalence in both data sets. These two findings merely confirm the first part of the chain of events originally hypothesized as the intrapersonal mechanism, that cross-cutting exposure leads to ambivalence, which in turn may hamper participation. More surprising, however, is the fact that cross-cutting exposure's impact on ambivalence is also concentrated among the conflict avoidant. As shown in column 3, when the interaction between conflict avoidance and cross-cutting exposure is included, the model significantly improves with the inclusion of this additional variable ($F\text{-change} = 6.02, p < .05$), thus indicating that cross-cutting exposure encourages ambivalence particularly among those who are conflict averse.

This finding suggests that the theoretical distinction between intrapersonal conflict/ambivalence (conflict

within one's own thoughts and feelings) and interpersonal conflict/social accountability (conflict between one's own views and those of others) is mistaken in its compartmentalization of these two mechanisms of influence. Consistent with Priester and Petty's (2001) recent laboratory evidence, I find that conflicting influences within people's interpersonal networks can foster expressions of ambivalence even in the absence of new information. In this case, the cause of ambivalence is not the introduction of new or conflicting information that makes political decisions difficult. Instead, ambivalence is produced by conflicts within the social environment itself.

Ultimately then, the two processes of influence that I have outlined are tightly intertwined. Conflict aversion conditions people's reactions to cross-cutting exposure directly, by discouraging participation, and indirectly, by encouraging greater ambivalence. Because cross-cutting exposure does not maintain independent direct effects on ambivalence once the interaction with conflict avoidance is concluded, these results suggest that cross-cutting exposure's effects on expressions of ambivalence are primarily due to social concerns as well. I find no evidence supporting the idea that it is the informational influence of cross-cutting exposure that produces internally ambivalent citizens. It is possible, of course, that expressions of ambivalence constructed from survey responses do not accurately represent people's internal states. Such expressions are semi-private at best, and thus they may incorporate some of the same social anxiety that leads cross-cutting networks to inhibit participation.

As with all findings based on cross-sectional data, it is important to acknowledge limitations in the strength of causal inferences that can be drawn. On the one hand, the consistency and robustness of these findings across data sets and across various participatory acts supports the social-psychological interpretation of these relationships as resulting from the social consequences of living in mixed political company. Moreover, because these models all control for political interest, partisan extremity, and, in some cases, political knowledge, they may provide relatively conservative estimates of the total impact of cross-cutting exposure. For example, to the extent that cross-cutting exposure decreases participation indirectly by depressing political interest as Funk (2001) has argued, such effects would not be manifested in the strength of these coefficients. On the other hand, the possibility of spurious relationships cannot be ruled out completely. But it is worth noting that even if one abandons a causal inference and settles for a simple association between these variables, it is still a substantively important finding for democratic theory that high levels of

TABLE 6 Effects of Network Composition on Ambivalence

	CNEP '92	Spencer '96	Spencer '96 with interaction
Network Characteristics			
Cross-cutting exposure	.82*** (4.94)	.26*** (3.72)	.12 (1.28)
Frequency of political talk	-.24* (2.40)	-.16 (1.36)	-.16 (1.41)
Size of network	.05 (1.07)	.06 (.61)	.07 (.68)
Conflict avoidant		-.04 (.29)	-.03 (.23)
Conflict avoidant x Cross-cutting Exposure			.34* (2.45)
Control Variables			
Political interest	.02 (.27)	-.07 (.79)	-.06 (.68)
Education	-.04 (.84)	.21** (2.80)	.21** (2.81)
Republican (strength of)	-.07 (.89)	-.54*** (6.48)	-.54*** (6.49)
Democrat (strength of)	-.16* (2.27)	-.55*** (6.50)	-.55*** (6.55)
Age	-.00 (.48)	-.01 (1.64)	-.01 (1.71)
Income	.04 (.95)	.02 (.28)	.02 (.29)
Race (white)	-.15 (.93)	.45* (2.09)	.47* (2.19)
Gender (female)	-.40*** (3.68)	-.38* (2.39)	-.36* (2.30)
Minor children		-.03 (.19)	-.04 (.26)
Political Knowledge		-.04 (.62)	-.04 (.60)
Constant	-1.25* (2.40)	-.75 (1.74)	-.80 (1.86)
Sample size	1086	670	670
R ²	.061	.157	.164

Note: Entries are coefficients from three OLS regression equations with t-values in parentheses. The R² change between the model in column 2 and column 3 was significant (F-change = 6.02, p < .05).

***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

participation go hand in hand with homogeneous networks. If political action is being carried out by those least well equipped with the kind of cross-cutting exposure that facilitates balanced judgments, then the quality of those decisions may suffer as a result. Exposure to

those with views unlike one's own makes people more aware of legitimate rationales for opposing viewpoints and encourages greater tolerance (see Mutz 2002; Price, Capella, and Nir 2002), yet this kind of exposure is least prevalent among those who participate the most.

Discussion

By moving closer to measuring the actual concept of interest in the theory of cross-pressures, scholars may end up changing the accepted conclusions about their impact. In this study, I have gone well beyond using paired-group memberships that might logically be inferred to produce conflict through social interaction, and even beyond measures that consider the partisan composition of an individual's social network, to assess the extent of actual exposure to cross-cutting political communication within the network. Doing so appears to challenge the currently accepted consensus on whether cross-cutting social influences have implications for political participation. Further replications across more than the two data sets used here are obviously in order before reaching broader conclusions, but the consistency of these findings across different measures of participation and across data sets suggests that this line of inquiry may have been abandoned prematurely.

Perhaps more importantly, the contribution of this study goes beyond challenging the current consensus on *whether* cross-cutting networks have consequences to explain *why* they affect participation. The results of this study suggest that people entrenched in politically heterogeneous social networks retreat from political activity mainly out of a desire to avoid putting their social relationships at risk. This interpretation is supported by the fact that it is those who are conflict avoidant, in particular, who are most likely to respond negatively to cross-cutting exposure by limiting their political participation. Exposure to those with political views different from one's own also creates greater ambivalence about political options, and thus makes it more difficult to take decisive political action. But even expressions of ambivalence are themselves conditioned by a desire to avoid social conflict; cross-cutting exposure leads to ambivalence primarily among those who fear face-to-face conflict.

Although they are obviously linked in practice, the intrapersonal and the interpersonal processes of influence typically differ in the kinds of normative implications that are drawn from them. Most would not chastise citizens for backing off from political participation because they are ambivalent toward candidates or policy positions. Few would blame citizens for their lack of decisiveness if it results from giving full consideration to a complex decision. This is, after all, the work of the diligent, deliberative citizen. If a person truly has no strong preference toward one political position or candidate because he finds it difficult to resolve the competing considerations weighing on various sides, then it would seem

perverse to expect political activism from him, and delaying political decisions would appear to be a logical and sensible response.

On the other hand, political withdrawal because of a fear of how others in one's social environment might respond will strike most as more problematic in terms of what it says about American political culture. Likewise, ambivalence that results from external social pressure as opposed to competing internal considerations appears unhealthy for purposes of democratic decision making. Surely political disagreement is possible without risking damage to one's interpersonal relationships. And how can a political culture that depends on the notion of free and open debate realize the benefits of frank and open discussion if it is seen to be at odds with the pursuit of social harmony? Some research suggests that conflict between one's own and others' views may be particularly difficult for Americans relative to citizens of other countries (Peng and Nisbett 1999), though little is known about cross-cultural comparisons of the extent to which political disagreement is deemed socially acceptable.

But given that political activism in the contemporary United States *does* involve social risks, how harshly should we judge citizens for taking this potential cost into account? It is difficult to fault citizens for valuing smooth social interactions and wanting to get along with diverse others on a day to day basis. As Warren has noted, students of political engagement often "fail to come to grips with the fact that even under the best of circumstances, political relationships are among the most difficult of social relationships" (1996, 244). Because politics evokes anxieties and threatens social bonds, it is not always seen as an attractive opportunity, particularly for those located in heterogeneous social environments.

Cross-cutting exposure also poses a disturbing dilemma for images of the ideal citizen. If we were to structure people's day-to-day interactions to maximize democratic ends, what kind of social environments should individuals ideally have? Some individual characteristics, such as level of education and political knowledge, have uniformly positive implications for what is generally valued in democratic citizens. But the diversity of one's social environment is unfortunately not one of these things. Those who, like myself, are generally quick to jump to the conclusion that this ideal should be a milieu that exposes people to as many conflicting political perspectives as possible need to consider the quandary posed by these findings: the kind of environment widely assumed to encourage an open and tolerant society is not necessarily the same kind of environment that produces an enthusiastically participative one (see Mutz 2002).

Although I offer no easy solution to this dilemma, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that the nature of people's political social environments and political networks may involve important trade-offs. There is a tendency to see the ideal citizen as a neat package of characteristics that all fit comfortably together into a single composite portrait of what ideal citizens ought to be like. The problem is that for some very logical reasons, these characteristics do not cohere. We want the democratic citizen to be enthusiastically politically active and strongly partisan, yet not to be surrounded by like-minded others. We want this citizen to be aware of all of the rationales for opposing sides of an issue, yet not to be paralyzed by the kinds of cross-pressures it brings to bear. And we want tight-knit, close networks of mutual trust, but we want them to be among people who frequently disagree. At the very least this is a difficult bill to fill.

This study is obviously not the first to note these kinds of tensions. *The Civic Culture* similarly questioned the participative ideal and the trade-offs necessary for a completely activist political culture, suggesting that more mixed political cultures facilitate stability in democratic systems (Almond and Verba 1989). More recently, in a case study of Weimar Germany's rich associational life, Berman (1997) noted how these many groups and dense networks mobilized citizens for political action while simultaneously deepening cleavages among them. The associations were generally organized *within* rather than *across* group: "However horizontally organized and civic minded these associations may have been, they tended to hibe their memberships off from the rest of society and contribute to the formation of what one observer has called 'ferociously jealous small republics'" (Berman 1997, 426). It was from these highly homogeneous, highly activist groups that Hitler drew his support, not from alienated individuals who lacked associational memberships. Of course, when political participation takes such undesirable forms, it is easy to side with advocates of heterogeneity. In this context, cross-cutting social networks have long been touted as potential antidotes to the kind of intergroup polarization that leads to political violence (see, e.g., Hewstone and Cairns 2001; Jalali and Lipset 1992). But heterogeneous social contacts may also subdue more conventional forms of participation.

Homogeneous environments are ideal for purposes of encouraging political mobilization. Like-minded people can encourage one another in their viewpoints, promote recognition of common problems, and spur one another on to collective action. Heterogeneity makes these same activities much harder. Participation and involvement are best encouraged by social environments that offer reinforcement and encouragement, not ones that raise

the social costs of political engagement. Paradoxically, the prospects for truly deliberative encounters may suffer while prospects for participation and political activism are burgeoning.¹⁴ Thus models connecting the quality and quantity of social interaction to democratic values need to take into account the functions served by both homogeneous and heterogeneous social interactions.

Appendix A Spencer Survey

Design: This national telephone survey was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center from September, 1996 through election eve using random-digit dialing. Each number was screened to verify that it was associated with a household. The person selected for the interview was randomly chosen from among household members at least 18 years old, with no substitutions allowed. The response rate was 47 percent, calculated as the proportion of completed interviews divided by total sample (including those who never answered and all other nonresponse and refusals) minus the nonsample numbers. This is virtually identical to the rate obtained in the CNEP survey. Interviews averaged 25 minutes. A maximum of 30 calls was made to each nonanswering or otherwise unresolved telephone number.

Discussant Generator: "From time to time, people discuss government, elections, and politics with other people. We'd like to know the first names or just the initials of people you talk with about these matters. These people might be from your family, from work, from the neighborhood, from some other organization you belong to, or they might be from somewhere else. Who is the person you've talked with most about politics? (Discussant #1) Aside from this person, who is the person you've talked with most about politics? (Discussant #2) Aside from anyone you've already mentioned, is there anyone else you've talked with about politics (Discussant #3)?" If at any point the respondent could not give a name: "Well then, can you give the first name of the person with whom you were most likely to have informal conversations during the course of the past few months?"

¹⁴Schudson (1995) suggests that the information environment created by the press has operated in similar fashion: early in the 20th century the heavily partisan press played an important booster role, encouraging partisanship and mobilizing mass publics in part by purposely avoiding exposing readers to conflicting political views. By contrast, today's largely nonpartisan press does not serve the interests of mobilization, although it does expose people to far more views different from their own than do personal networks (Mutz and Martin 2001).

Frequency of Political Talk: “When you talk with [discussant], do you discuss politics a lot, some, a little, or very rarely?” Coded 0 if no discussant was named or R reports no political discussion with the discussant, 1 if very rarely, 2 if a little, 3 if some, and 4 if a lot. Summed across all discussants.

Cross-Cutting Exposure: Five items were coded as indicated below, standardized, and then combined into an additive index representing the extent to which each discussion partner held differing views. To produce an indicator of the respondent’s overall extent of exposure to dissonant political views, these three measures were weighted by the frequency of the respondent’s interactions with that particular discussant, before combining them across each of the three discussants for a summary measure, which was also standardized.

1. “Compared with [discussant], would you say that your political views are much the same (low), somewhat different, or very different (high) ?”
2. “Do you think [discussant] normally favors Republicans or Democrats, or both, or neither?” Scored as same as respondent’s partisanship (low), different from respondent’s partisanship (high), or neither.
3. “Which presidential candidate, if any, does [discussant] favor? Clinton, Dole, Perot or some other candidate?” Scored as same as respondent’s preference (low), different from respondent’s preference (high), or neither.
4. “Overall, do you feel [discussant] shares most of your views on political issues (low), opposes them (high), or doesn’t [person’s name] do either one?”
5. “When you discuss politics with [discussant], do you disagree often (high), sometimes, rarely, or never (low)?”

Political Interest: “Some people seem to follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?”

Political Knowledge: Additive index of the number of correct responses to five questions.

1. First, do you happen to know which party has the most members in the House of Representative in Washington? Democrats or Republicans?
2. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to override a presidential veto? One half plus one vote, three-fifths, two thirds, or three quarters?
3. In general, thinking about the political parties in Washington would you say Democrats are more conservative

than Republicans, or Republicans are more conservative than Democrats?

4. Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, Congress, or the Supreme Court?
5. What political office is now held by Al Gore?

Intent to Vote ’96: “So far as you know, do you expect to vote in the national election this coming November, or haven’t you decided yet?” Plans to vote=1; else=0.

Conflict Avoidance: Scale formed by summing the number of conflict averse responses to four questions, dichotomized at the median into low (0) and high (1) conflict avoidance. “Some people have told us that they are occasionally reluctant to talk about politics. I would like to read you several statements and ask if they are true or false as they apply to you. I am sometimes reluctant to talk about politics (1) . . . because I don’t like arguments; (2) . . . because it creates enemies; (3) because I worry about what people would think of me; (4) If you wanted to discuss political and governmental affairs, are there some people you definitely wouldn’t turn to, that is, people with whom you feel it is better not to discuss such topics?”

Republican/Democrat (strength of): Coded 2 if strong Republican or Democrat, 1 if weak and 0 otherwise.

Education: Coded as 1 if less than high school, 2 if high school, 3 if some college or vocational training, 4 if college degree, and 5 if the respondent has pursued graduate education.

Income: Coded as annual income with the categories \$10,000 if less than \$10,000; \$15,000 if between \$10,000 and \$20,000; \$25,000 if between \$20,000 and \$30,000; \$35,000 if between \$30,000 and \$40,000; \$45,000 if between \$40,000 and \$50,000; and \$50,000 if more than \$50,000.

Appendix B Cross-National Election Project: American Component

Discussant Generator: “Now let’s shift our attention to another area. From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months, I’d like to know the people you talked with about matters that are important to you. Can you think of anyone? What is this person’s first name? Is there anyone else you talk with about matters that are important to you?” Up to four names are accepted, then: “Aside from anyone you have already mentioned, who is the person you talked with most about the events of the recent presidential election campaign?”

Cross-cutting Exposure: Constructed from measures of which candidate the R supports relative to the perceived support of Clinton, Dole, or Perot by the discussants as measured by the question, "Which candidate do you think [discussant] supported in the presidential election this year?" 0) absolute agreement (i.e., respondent and discussant concur), (1) mixed (either respondent or discussant is independent/neutral), (2) disagreement (respondent and discussant disagree).

Democratic or Republican (strength of): Two three-point scales were constructed based on whether Rs were strong Republicans/Democrats (2), weak Republicans/Democrats (1), or neither (0).

Participation Index: Combined total of the Confrontational and Nonconfrontational participation items. *Confrontational Participation:* (The sum of responses to two items, ranging from 0 to 2.) "During the recent campaign, did you talk to any people to try to convince them why they should vote for or against a particular candidate?" "Did you work for any political party or candidate in the recent election campaign?" *Nonconfrontational Participation:* The sum of responses to three items, ranging from 0 to 3. "Did you attend any meetings or election rallies for any candidate or political party?" "Did you put up a political yard sign or bumper sticker or wear a campaign button for any candidate or political party?" "Did you give any money to a political party or candidate?"

Presidential Voting in 1992 and 1988: Combined measure of Vote in 1992: "In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just don't have the time. How about you—did you vote in the election this November?" 1=yes, 0=no; and measure of Vote in 1988: "Not everyone had a chance to vote in 1988 when George Bush ran on the Republican ticket against Michael Dukakis for the Democrats. Do you remember which candidate you voted for in that election, or didn't you vote?" 1=voted for a candidate, 0=didn't vote.

Lateness of Decision: "When did you make your decision to vote for ____? Did you decide sometime in the week before the election (4), earlier in the fall campaign (3), during the summer (2), or before the summer(1)?"

Congressional Voting: "How about the election for Congress—that is, for the House of Representatives in Washington. Did you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?" 1=voted, 0=did not vote.

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