Participation and Human Development

BACKGROUND PAPER COMMISSIONED FOR:

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA

American Human Development Report 2008-2009

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May 2008

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PARTICIPATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT[1]

The first United Nations Development Programme Human Development report (1990) stressed that human development involves not only the formation of capabilities, or what people can do and be, but also the use people make of them. Individuals according to this approach are not just beneficiaries of development but also participants in it. Participation should maximize their choices in terms of the capabilities they can form and how they can use them, and as such should involve real potential to shape society. Participation thus involves having a say in decisions made in many domains – political, economic, social, and cultural - that affect individual lives, as well as inclusion in the social relations (Sen 2000) of the community. It entails a range of activities in which individuals seek to influence structures in all of these domains. In expressing their views and joining with others to shape society, Americans also participate in articulating the "values and priorities" (Sen 1999) of the nation.

This key component of the capabilities approach, participation, is not measured in the American Human Development Index or generally in human development reports published by UNDP. In fact it is notoriously difficult to measure all the components of participation that are important for achieving democracy and real choice in how people can live their lives. For example, while there are data on patterns of voting, signing petitions, and volunteering, it is harder to assess who has political influence and when they have it, how government actors respond to concerns, what constitutes full economic participation, and obstacles to participation in social life. Previous efforts to identify measurable components of human development that relate to political freedom included concepts such as personal security, rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation, and equality of opportunity. Researchers have also found no simple way to measure exclusion and inclusion, which are related to participation. In spite of these difficulties, the subject of participation deserves attention because of its crucial importance for advancing the principles and policies that promote human development. Yet concerns about societal change that would promote human development must necessarily go beyond asking if, how, and why individuals do or do not participate to asking whether structures and processes in the American system of government and in other institutions or structures that affect the level of democracy and human development in our society.

This means that to be consistent with the values inherent in the human development approach, participation should be inclusive and equal, in that all should have an opportunity to participate, and a diversity of individuals and views should be represented. Ideally such participation should shape society in ways that contribute to human development. Fostering participation requires establishing institutions, policies, and practices that facilitate action and contribute to agency while enhancing accountability and transparency in centers of power. Further, democratic participation means that democracy must encompass the means of making decisions (Cornwall and Coelho 2007), including the institutions that structure them in multiple spheres: the workplace, the halls of Congress, the School Board, and others.

Much discussion of participation focuses on whether or not individuals vote or join organizations or volunteer and why they do or do not. Individual participation is important, and a lack of it limits democracy and the potential to shape a society that responds to needs and views of more than a minority. Some processes (Lister 2004) and structures, such as barriers to expressing political voice through voting, or to obtaining credit, or to enrolling a child in a good public school, block participation. Exclusion and barriers to participation contribute to a human impoverishment experienced acutely at the individual level. The impact reverberates throughout society due to a diminishment in human capabilities and a perpetuation of social structures and policies that neither unleash the potential talents nor respond to the different needs of our diverse society.

But enhancing or deepening individuals' participation alone cannot improve human development if responses to it are unequal and if the political or economic or social institutions in which

[1] I would like to thank William Rodgers, Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis, Eduardo Martins, and Dale Reynolds for their input and shaping of this paper along with multiple rounds of helpful reviews and comments, and the reviewers, Jane Junn, Peter Levine, and Daniel Smith for excellent comments and suggestions. Caroline Repko, Namrita Khandelwal, Ben DeMarzo, Sarah Geiger, and Theodore Murphy all contributed valuable research and suggestions.

it is hoped individuals participate contribute to conditions that run counter to the goals of human development. For example, if a goal of human development is to enhance freedom to choose, we must ask not just whether people raise their voices to express preferences but also whether the political system presents expanded choices and opportunities to voice them at points that matter. If participation is to lead to policies that respond to needs and wishes of a diversity of American citizens, but occurs within a context of inequality, we should ask how democracy might be structured to promote equality as well as asking why relatively less powerful people participate less. Understanding the history of American democracy is important for understanding why its institutions may not always promote full equality.

An exclusive focus on individual participation would also leave aside a lot of decision-making about the shape of American society. This is in part a problem of measurement: the limits of existing measures of participation are illustrated by realms of policymaking that either offer little opportunity for participation of unorganized individuals or involve participation that is not often measured in surveys. For example, the executive branch of government makes a great deal of policy as do countless bodies at multiple levels of government, in part through regulatory processes that are open to public comment. However, even if individuals do seek to influence these policies such acts are generally not measured.

Within this framework and recognizing these constraints, this paper will seek to define and examine some aspects of American participation in the context of the results of the first American Human Development Index, while recognizing that limited data make this difficult. The paper raises questions such as: what is the status of participation in the United States today? What practices and institutions facilitate or impede participation? What type of participation can improve human development for all (rather than a powerful few), and how can we move toward this? Although it is not possible to fully answer these questions, this paper will identify remaining questions and concerns about representation and responsiveness, money in politics, and inequality. It also highlights some interesting examples of participation that achieved change, in the hope of stimulating discussion on how we might move forward as a society to improve human development. Finally the paper makes suggestions for facilitating voting (just one of many forms of political participation) and contributing to thoughtful approaches to education.

1.0 WHAT IS PARTICIPATION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT?

Meaningful participation – particularly in a context of democratic institutions and responsiveness from elected officials – is critical to human well-being, fundamental to a flourishing democracy, and an essential element of human development. Human development has two sides – the formation of capabilities and the use of capabilities to create development. The participation of individuals, with the goal of influencing politics, economics, culture, and social relations, plays a key role in the formation of capabilities. And, in turn, those capabilities determine the extent and effectiveness of a person or group's participation. There are many ways to participate. A constituent writes a letter to a member of Congress seeking to influence her decision on legislation. A group of parents protests mandatory sentencing guidelines. An employee seeks input in the future direction of her company. A consumer boycotts a company that mistreats employees or harms the environment. A worker joins a union to seek better working conditions. A social movement protests poverty. A former prisoner seeks a job. In each instance, individuals alone or together seek to participate in society.

The opportunity to participate in the decisions that affect people has intrinsic value to *enhance lives*. Participation can *build skills* and increase confidence. Through participation, societies can develop shared values that may contribute to *cohesion.* Provided that governments respond to citizen's voices and facilitate real citizen participation in decision-making, participation can both *create more effective public administration* by involving people in policy design. Where accountability and responsiveness exist, and if participation improves understanding for policies and how they are made, participation can *enhance trust*. Participation can provide *avenues of redress* if real opportunities exist for marginalized people to safely raise concerns. Under such conditions, there is the potential for participation to *diminish societal inequality*. Finally, poor policy design in any sector has a cost, and as such there is a possibility that decisions informed by experiences of those affected may *cost less*. A host of research has also demonstrated the benefits of participation to individuals. For example, among youth it may be related to improved odds of college graduation among high school service participants, and work in community organizations (unlike leisure activities and school assignments) has been associated with the development of initiative among

students. It is important to reflect on participation experiences. For example, a program that asked teenage students to discuss service experience and youth development was associated with reduced teen pregnancy, school suspension, and school failure.

Types of Participation

To simplify discussion, we sort participation into three categories: political; economic; and social and civic. Political participation, the primary focus of this paper, seeks to influence elected officials, civil servants, and government institutions. It can be carried out by individuals or collectively when individuals join together to act informally or formally. Political voice may also be expressed in overt or undetected ways. Economic participation concerns ways in which individuals are involved in the economy, economic exchange, market relations, or business; thus it is largely carried out in the private rather than public sphere – but the political and economic increasingly overlap as businesses execute government functions and are called upon to contribute to public goals, and governments facilitate business activity through legislative actions. Similarly social and civic participation, which might include volunteering, participation in religious institutions, and efforts to improve society that do not necessarily target government, overlap with economic and political participation.

The table below gives some examples of types of participation in each of the domains, of which many (such as membership in unions) could be placed in two or more columns.

Political Participation: Activities of individuals and groups Target: government	Economic Participation: Activities may overlap with political and social/civic participation in economic exchange, work, markets	Social and Civic Participation Address problems through mechanisms other than policy change, but may affect or be partly due or related to public efforts or institutions (i.e., community meetings, P.T.A.)
• Individual acts of resistance • Registering to vote • Attending political meetings • Signing petitions • Involvement in campaigns or elections • Membership in political organizations (lobby groups, advocacy groups, and political parties) • Contacting elected officials • Contributing financially to campaigns • Contributing financially to political groups • Volunteering for elections • Attending and speaking at meetings of local, regional, state, or national government bodies • Demonstrating • Expressing opinions through media (writing opinion letters, contacting media, participating in talk shows) • Blogging or generating other media content on political topics • Door-to-door canvassing • Testifying at hearings • Lobbying • Mobilizing a membership base at national, state, or local levels • Raising awareness of a political issue • Engaging in deliberative discussion of political issues • Community organizing	• Labor market participation (having a job) • Participation in decision-making in the workplace • Access to goods and services, to financial services, and to credit • Political consumerism (such as buycotting and boycotting) • Joining a union	• Participation in community meetings • Joining non-political groups • Serving on public boards, councils, and public/private ventures • Participation in religious institutions • Community problem-solving • Creating arts and media products • Employment in the public or non-profit sectors • Raising money or fundraising for charity

1.1 A snapshot of participation in the United States

1.1.1. Individual expressions of political voice

Participation includes individual and collective acts to shape society, seek change, and address need. *Political* participation is most often measured at the individual level, and the most readily available data are on voting. Americans vote less than citizens in almost any nation, but they engage in other forms of political activity (some of which may communicate more substantial messages) more than in other countries (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 2004). Such activities include sending messages to elected officials through letters, emails, or other means and participating in electoral politics in ways other than voting. However, this participation tends to be unequal.

The following table summarizes ways in which Americans express political voice drawn from 2006 survey data (Lopez et al 2006). From 2 to 25 percent engage in most forms of participation, aside from voting and trying to persuade others to vote (reported by about 33 percent).

Expressions of Political Voice	
Regularly volunteered for political candidates or groups	2%
Participated in door-to-door canvassing (last 12 months)	3%
Contacted print media (last 12 months)	8%
Contacted broadcast media (last 12 months)	9%
Donated money to a candidate or party (past 12 months)	9%
Took part in a demonstration (last 12 months)	9%
Contacted an official (last 12 months)	14%
Ran, walked or bicycled for Charity (past 12 months)	17%
Signed an email petition (last 12 months)	17%
Member of group involved in politics	19%
Signed a paper petition (last 12 months)	20%
Regularly did non-political volunteering	20%
Displayed campaign button or sign	24%

Source: Calculations by C. Repko from 2006 National Political, Civic and Electoral Participation Survey (CIRLCE)

Voting is the most common form of political activity in the U.S., though it is more common for national elections: for example, turnout was 60.3% in the 2004 Presidential election and 40.4% in the 2006 non-Presidential election (Stanley and Niemi 2008),[2] but it ranges at the state level from 45-72% (McDonald 2002).[3] Furthermore, while 96% of U.S. elected officials hold local offices, local turnout is under 50% and often close to one-fifth or one-third of the electorate. In some states opportunities to vote now include voting on direct democracy measures such as initiatives (which citizens may place on state ballots for consideration by collecting a required number of signatures) and referenda (bills that state legislatures present to the entire population). There is some evidence that such measures can increase turnout and knowledge (Tolbert et al. 2003), but there is also evidence that direct democracy processes may be biased in favor of wealthier voters.

Percent Reporting They Voted in 2004 Presidential Election (Source: Vital Statistics in American Politics)

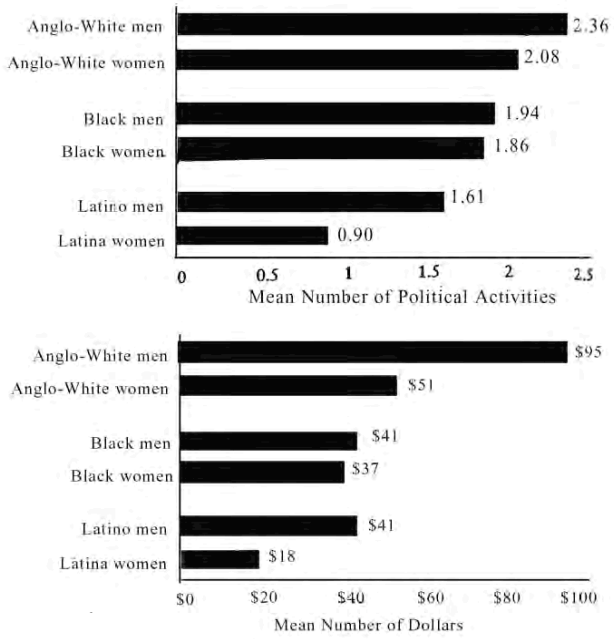
White	60
Black	56
Hispanic citizen	47
Men	56
Women	60
Northeast	59
Midwest	65

Nearly all states disenfranchise felons in prison, over half disenfranchise those on parole and probation, and over 10 disenfranchise ex-offenders. Where restrictions are strong a significant proportion of the voting age population may be excluded (in 2000 6.3% in Georgia, 4.9% in Delaware, and 4.8% in Texas could not vote (McDonald 2002). Non-citizen immigrants cannot vote other than in a very few local elections.

es noncitizens and ineligible felons from the voting-age population and adds

s the base. Drawn from Current Population Survey.

Figure 3: Overall Political Activity by Race or Ethnicity. (citizen participation study)



Source: Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 278

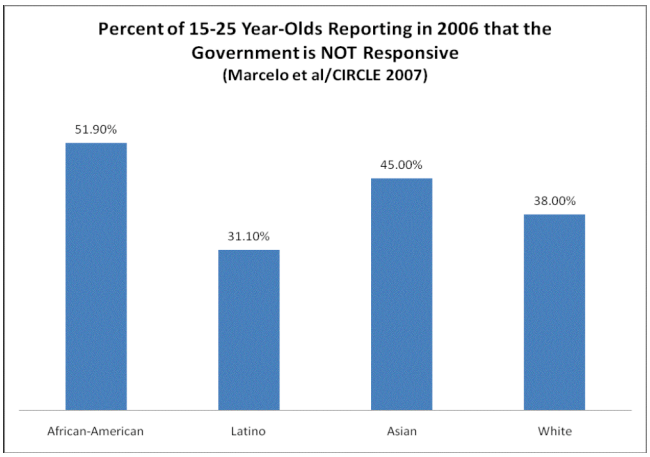
Disparities in expressions of voice exist according to income, educational level, age, sex, and race. For voting specifically, higher rates are consistently found among those with higher income, age, education, occupational status, and U.S.-born (compared to naturalized) citizens (Freeman 2003). Data from 2004 indicate slight regional differences in the percent who reported voting in the Presidential election (see box), and some research indicates that voting participation in the South has grown in recent years (Stanley and Niemi 2008). Low-income voters are also more likely to skip over initiative or referendum ballot questions while voting (Goldsmith 2005). Research has shown that education is the strongest predictor of activism such as campaign work and contributions, contact with elected officials, protests and belonging to organizations (Norris 1996). Other research shows that education and income combined is a consistent predictor (Verba 2004).

Race disparities in participation levels are inconsistent. For example, one study (Burns, Schlozmann, and Verba 2001) found little difference between African-Americans and whites in participation, depending upon the type of activity, but lower rates among Latinos. African-Americans participated at higher or nearly the same rates as whites in campaign work, campaign contributions, protest, informal community activity, or serving as a board member, while participation levels of whites were at least 8% higher than those of other races for voting, contacting public officials, and membership in political organization. Other studies, primarily among Latinos but also among Asian- and Arab-Americans, have shown that immigrants engage less than citizens in a range of political activities (SSRC 2008). Although some of these differences disappear when factors such as education, income, and civic skills are taken into account, the differences are important because, when issues of interest align with racial or ethnic background, issues of groups that participate less will be underrepresented. The figure below shows a breakdown in participation by race or ethnicity and gender. The mean number of political activities is highest among white men and lowest for Latina women. However, when the average number of activities is considered their participation is lower (see below). The figure below also indicates that women within each racial-ethnic group engage in a lower average number of political activities than men in the same group. One of the most striking themes in the HDI results is the evidence of disparity in the index scores among regions, states, and Congressional Districts and along the lines of sex and race-ethnicity. The index does not measure participation, but interestingly the index scores tend to be ranked in a relatively similar order as the statistics in the figure above from Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001).

More recent data collected in 2006 by CIRCLE (Marcelo et al 2007) on expressions of political voice among youth of different racial and ethnic backgrounds indicates that participate levels according to group change with the type of activity. African-American youth reported involvement in the most electoral activities (such as being a regular voter, being a member of a group involved in politics, and donating money to a candidate or party and were most likely to report canvassing and contacting print media (uncommon activities for all groups), and were about as likely as whites to sign email and paper

petitions. African-American youth are most likely to have engaged in two or more electoral activities (21.5%) and second most likely to have participated in both two or more electoral and civic activities (16.6%), second only to Asian (17.1%). Latinos were most likely to be disengaged overall but 71.4% reported engaging in at least one activity of any kind in the last year. Between a fifth and a third of all groups engaged in forms of protest targeting corporations - boycotting and buycotting. Asian youth expressed political voice in 2006 at higher rates than all groups in most categories (with the exception of "boycotting," contacting the media, and protesting. Latinos and African Americans, in that order, protested more than Asians and whites.

The same study reported attitudes about government and politics. While 23 to 40% of 15-25 year olds said they "had not thought much about," whether the government is responsive to "the genuine needs of the public," the percent who indicated that the government is not are striking. A negative response to this question was more common in 2006 for all groups surveyed in 2002 (Asian youths were added to the survey in 2006). (see graph). However, recent data from CIRCLE (Kirby, Marcelo, Gillerman, and Linkins 2008) also indicate that youths may be energized by the 2008 Presidential election; 17% of youth (under 30) voted in the primaries as compared to 9% in 2000, for states for which data are available in both cycles.[4]



Differences in levels of participation have implications for the messages elected officials receive. For example, 65% of advantaged respondents to one survey, compared to 23% of disadvantaged respondents, sent "messages" to government officials through mechanisms such as letters, protests, campaign contributions with a specific message, or community activity.[5] Advantaged respondents were three times more likely to focus in their communication on taxes, spending, and budget issues while disadvantaged respondents were twice as likely to address basic needs including food, housing, and health care (Verba 2003, 670).

There are important differences in types of political and civic engagement that relate to both age and generation in complicated ways. Some styles and habits of participation change with age and others are persistent within a generation as it ages (Zukin et al 2006).[6] For example, younger Americans tend to participate less in political activities than older Americans, attend less to government and politics, and are less likely to see contacting elected officials as important while they view the private sector as an important influence (Zukin et al 2006). Their preference for civic rather than political engagement does not necessarily translate into higher levels of volunteering relative to volunteering older generations either currently or at their age. As for another famed generation, the boomers, they are more likely than other generations to engage in both political and civic activity (Zukin et al. 2006).

[4] Data from media, exit poll results from Edison/Mitofsky, and population estimates from CPS March Demographic file (2000 and 2008)
[5] Advantaged: those with some college and income at least $50,000; disadvantaged: income of $20,000 or less and no more than high school education.
[6] Correspondence with Peter Levine

1.1.1. Joining together for political participation

An important dimension of political participation is people coming together, whether for collective expressions of political voice, information sharing, deliberation, or education. Organized groups of people can facilitate learning about issues and foster political interest. Government reception and response to citizens' voices is more likely when voices are gathered together. For relatively disadvantaged people, joining voices may be the only way concerns will be heard. Many advantaged and powerful Americans also come together in groups and associations to press their concerns or contribute money to such groups.

In 2006 about 19% of Americans belonged to a group they defined as "involved in politics"; only 2% of the population regularly volunteered for political groups.[7] Political groups include political parties, interest groups, advocacy groups, social movements, and a variety of associations that may be civic or political. National associations in 1999 (Skocpol 2004) comprised trade and business; labor; religious; fraternal, ethnic, veterans; public affairs and social welfare; educational and cultural; health and medical; hobbies and sports; and all others. The largest proportion of these was trade and business, while labor made up by far the smallest proportion of groups. Recent studies have found interest groups more often represent businesses and occupations than less wealthy constituencies or "those rooted in moral or ideological appeals (Andrews and Edwards 2004)." Groups such as political action committees that make large campaign contributions are also important (though these have been curtailed recently). Groups with missions other than just targeting elected officials also organize members to express political voice. For example, religion has been a much-discussed factor in conservative movements, but many types of religious organizations also address a range of issues from poverty to human trafficking with a progressive stance. Unions often mobilize members for political participation, and the dramatic decline in membership in unions has been linked to declines in the electorate (Radcliff and Davis 2000, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, 1995).

Social movements often address underrepresented issues and constituencies, but they can fall anywhere on the political spectrum. They may also seek cultural change that does not necessarily target government (Andrews and Edwards 2004) and as such may put forth fundamental critiques of society's organization and values. Notable international movements have emerged in recent years including the Jubilee 2000 campaign, Ban Landmines campaign, and Global Justice movement. In the U.S., the 2006 immigrant protests involved a remarkable surge in activity among a group with real reasons to fear speaking out. The women's movement, civil rights movement, Religious Right, and libertarians have all left their marks on society. Today environmental organizations are increasing pressure on governments to address climate change; living wage movements have emerged in many cities; and a care movement is arguing for revaluing and providing for care of children, people with ill health or disabilities, and the elderly. Many social movements and other advocacy organizations today are professionalized and centralized, and there is some debate about whether this contributes to their potential effectiveness and or compromises their ability to present creative solutions (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Advocacy organized around specialized issues and identities is common. While experts may disagree on whether and under what conditions social movements are effective, they provide an important means of raising voices collectively that might not be heard individually. They also create avenues for involvement that can raise participants' awareness of social issues and the importance of participation while building skills and efficacy of those involved. Social movements can also be avenues for repression.

Community organizing is an important form of grassroots participation that provides a mechanism for mobilizing citizens who may have little access to political institutions. It is particularly conducive to focusing on local issues. The classic model involves power analysis, research, consciousness-raising, and leadership development (Institute for Education and Social Policy 2003). Community organizing has also become more professionalized and may be driven by outsiders, but many organizations, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation, PICO Network, and Gamaliel, work with specific communities to identify issues that resonate with the needs, cultures, and values of their members (Boyte 2005). In addition to expressing voice, some community organizing groups engage in joint problem-

[7] Calculations by C. Krepko from data in Lopez et al 2006 (CIRCLE)

solving and the production of public goods along with government. Examples of other efforts to address problems and political issues at the local level through deliberation or dialogue are profiled in the box below.

1.1.3 Other forms of participation: economic and civic

Economic and civic participation are also important to human development because they offer some of the same individual and societal benefits as political participation. Both can foster skills, efficacy, confidence, knowledge, and awareness among individuals, and both can shape society. Participation in the economic sphere is often viewed in terms of labor market participation, specifically having a job in the formal labor market, but economic security depends on a number of other types of economic participation, such as access to goods and services, to financial services, and to credit. While we may not often think about economic participation per se, economic exclusion has serious consequences for individuals and communities, and for the economic health of the country.

In addition, participation in economic exchange can be a means of expressing political voice that directs messages at corporations rather than government. "Buycotting" and "boycotting" are common activities, particularly among young people, in which people use their consumer power to communicate beliefs to corporations. Young people see the private sector as an important influence on their lives. Canadian, Belgian, and American students use political consumerism as an activity to express their distrust of political institutions (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005, Zukin et al. 2006).

Statistics on Civic and Social Participation

- Voluntary activity in the United States was 26.7% in 2006.
- The opportunity to serve on a board has diminished by 75% since the mid-twentieth century.
- Nineteen per cent of Americans surveyed reported recently that they had engaged in "community problem-solving."
- The large debts faced by college students and limited sources of financial support mean many college graduates must privilege earning a high salary over contributing to society in their decision-making about employment.
- About one-fifth of 15- to 25-year-olds and one-fourth of those 26 and above were regular volunteers for non-political groups and active members of at least one group.
- Twenty-five percent had raised money for charity and 17% had run, walked or bicycled for charity.
- The number of national associations rose from 5,843 to 22,878 between 1959 and 1999. The proportion that were trade and business or labor groups declined, while the percentage that were "public affairs and social welfare," "educational and cultural," "health and medical," and "hobbies and sports" groups increased.

Sources: Peter Levine, Elinor Ostrom (2005) "A Frequently Overlooked Precondition of Democracy: Citizens Knowledgeable About and Engaged in Collective Action," Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, p. 8-9, population estimates from decennial US Censuses, Lopez et al/CIRCLE 2006, BLS, Current Population Survey data, Skocpol 2004a, Zukin et al 2006.

In relation to work, there are many mechanisms and degrees of participation, including working in the informal labor market, belonging to a union, participating in decision-making about the governance of a business or non-profit organization, and working in a position that may or may not offer ladders to a different future. At each level, practices and policies limit or facilitate participation or structure the conditions, often unequal, under which they occur. For example, workers in the informal labor market over the long term may enjoy certain freedoms but may also be vulnerable to exploitation, lack a demonstrable work history that facilitates entry into the formal market, and lack retirement savings. Union membership, far lower in the U.S. than in other OECD countries, can increase voice in an industry or organization. The causes and conditions of low-wage work constitute real limits on full participation. Opportunities to participate in workplace decision making, to control one's schedule and time on the job, and to advance to higher levels of skill and salary all can enhance the ability to participate fully in society and in the workplace, as can access to high-quality and affordable child care and education.

One example of economic exclusion may be found in a parallel economy that responds to the financial and banking needs of people with low credit ratings and no bank account. About 10% of U.S. households have no relationship with a mainstream financial service provider and use other institutions to buy on credit or rent vehicles, furniture, and appliances; to cash checks, pay bills, and wire money; to pawn goods; and to obtain short-term, high-interest loans to make ends meet between paychecks. It is typical for a "payday borrower" to pay back $793 on a loan of $325; the Center for Responsible Lending (2006) calculates that citizens can be saved $1.4 billion a year in states that ban "payday lending." Refund anticipation loans (along with fees for tax preparation) are also big business: about $1.57 billion in fees goes to preparers and lenders each year from recipients of the Earned Income Tax Credit. (National Consumer Law Center 2005). Legitimate financial institutions and community organizations could help to create non-exploitative means to meet this need, and a number of nonprofit organizations already have done so.

The income scores in the human development index tell us something about the state of economic participation in the U.S. The most striking result of the HDI for women is their far lower income score relative to men, which suggests some difficulties in economic participation (see table of types of participation). The possible reasons for the lower score, more fully discussed in the American Human Development Report**,** include lower pay, greater caregiving responsibilities, which can diminish earnings in a number of ways, occupational segregation, inability to find full-time jobs that can accommodate caregiving, and discrimination. The low income scores for Latinos and African-Americans relative to whites and Asians are also striking. One form of economic exclusion may be related to the divide between formal and informal labor market participation.

Civic engagement does not separate neatly from political engagement; for example, volunteering and public sector, non-governmental organizations in the United States may be intertwined with government, which in turn often promotes engagement in social and civic life. Government service programs such as Peace Corps, Teach for America, and VISTA, which compensate at lower levels than a college graduate might earn elsewhere, seek to address needs while providing service experience. Non-profit organizations, including religious organizations, are tax-exempt. The existence of public parks and recreational facilities encourages civic and social activity by creating spaces where people can meet and engage in projects together.

Participation in social and civic life may contribute to political participation by providing leadership skills and generating interest in political matters, though some choose to volunteer as an alternative to raising political voice –yet the two accomplish very different things, and some evidence indicates that civic participation does not always promote political participation (Milner 2008).

Data are available about some social and civic participation activities (see box "Statistics on Civic and Social Participation"). Indicators in the *American Human Development Report* indicate that in 2006 women volunteered more than men; people age 35-54 were most likely to volunteer; and whites, African Americans, Asian, and Latinos volunteered in descending order, while a 2007 study of youth participation indicated the highest rates among Asians (Marcelo, Lopez, and Kirby 2007). Fifteen countries rank ahead of the U.S. in volunteering, with rates ranging from 31% to 55% found in eastern, northern and southern parts of Europe.[8] However, national-level survey data on volunteering do not necessarily capture all the ways in which people support others in and outside of their neighborhoods and communities in order to improve quality of life, services, and general well-being.

Volunteering can provide people with their first exposure to social problems and help to build relationships and skills among volunteers. Volunteering may be associated with a "wage premium," or slightly higher wages, and people may volunteer to enhance their resumé or chances of getting into college. Volunteering, like all forms of participation, also can be enjoyable and rewarding. Young people who are encouraged or required to serve as volunteers in high school will not necessarily maintain this habit; studies have found varying effects of community service participation in high school, including a short-term effect on volunteering in early adulthood and decreases in service after graduation but also an association with volunteer work in adulthood and with later volunteering and voting.

2.0 THE PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENT

[8] Hackl et al 2007: good Samaritan article, add reference

The participatory environment refers to factors that affect the level and type of individual and collective participation and affect whether voices are heard, which voices are heard, and what response these voices provoke for which participating agents. Addressing all of these elements is outside the scope of this paper, but this section will briefly discuss factors affecting the results of participation in terms of the issues that are attended to, the voices that are heard, and response or lack of response from policymakers (2.1), steps that might increase expressions of voice in 2.2, and consider education for participation in 2.3.

2.1 Factors that Shape Participation and Its Results: Concerns, Issues, and Questions

2.1.1 Representation

Groups that are underrepresented in terms of policy *outcomes* might benefit from having elected representatives at any level who share their views or are sympathetic to their concerns (though there is debate about how much this helps). However, particularly at the national level, wealthy individuals, men, and whites are overrepresented in elected positions as compared to in the general population. For example, the 94% of the U.S. Senate and 84% of the U.S. House of Representatives were white in 2007, and only 16% in both houses were women (counting 71 women Representatives but not counting 3 women Delegates).[9] Scholars debate whether minorities and women are more likely to represent the concerns of similar constituents or contribute to more beneficial policy outcomes, but the shifting composition of Congress, state legislatures (see table below), and governors to resemble more closely the American population still may be seen as a sign of progress.

Blacks, Hispanics, and Women as a Percentage of State Legislators and Voting Age Population[10]

	Number and Percentage of Legislators	Percentage of Voting Age Population	Ratio
Blacks *(as of January 2006)*	612 8.3%	11.5%	.718
Hispanics *(as of November 2006, postelection)*	239 3.2%	12.6%	.257
Women *(as of January 2007)*	1.735 23.5%	51.9	.453

Incumbent elected officials have a great advantage in election campaigns, which U.S. Senators and State Governors have enjoyed to a lesser degree than U.S. Representatives since the mid-twentieth century. An important factor related to representation in the House of Representatives is the way in which Congressional districts are drawn by state legislatures. The reapportionment process, which is subject to party influence, occurs every ten years. Among other outcomes, it can bolster the likelihood of election of minority Members of Congress.[11]

Incumbents in Congress

- 6: maximum number of winning challengers to seated U.S. Representatives or Senators in each election since 1998.
- 40: number of winning challengers in 1974.
- $2 million: average amount spent by incumbents in 2004 congressional election.

2.1.2 Responsiveness

[9] Center for Women and Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts/Officeholders/cong-current.html, accessed June 12, 2008.
[10] Stanley and Niemi, 2008, Table 1-23.
[11] See Stanley and Niemi 2008, Table 1-20, p. 60

When people participate, do their actions influence decisions and outcomes? Do those in "centers of power" (Lister 2004) respond? Beliefs about government responsiveness influence attitudes about political participation. If government responds to diverse citizen views, policies are more likely to reflect needs and wishes of people they affect.

Some research shows that elected officials at the federal level generally are aware of their constituents' wishes, not only because of opinions constituents express directly but also through assessing the public mood and opinions that emerge in the media (Gilens 2005). Politicians may try to craft messages about their positions to build public support for them. Studies of elected officials' response to voters wishes indicate the following:

- Actions of officials may reflect the general mood and opinions, but not specific preferences.
- Representation can be skewed to the advantage of wealthier Americans, particularly when income groups do not agree about issues, so that policy outcomes are unrelated to policy preferences of poor constituents and bear little relationship to those of middle-income constituents (Gilens 2005).
- U.S. Senators' behavior and specific votes have a much stronger relationship to wealthy than to middle-class preferences and almost none to low-income preferences (Bartels 2005). The differences in outcomes are not attributable to group differences in voter turnout or contact with Senators and staff.

Improving *access* to local political process by creating more direct involvement is one potential option or increasing responsiveness, but this alone does not always improve the equality of *outcomes*. For example, a review of the effects of direct democracy measures (specifically initiatives and referenda) on making state policies more or less pro-poor indicated that outcomes tended to be regressive: tax limits, tax policy, and spending caps, common outcomes of such measures, all either benefit wealthier citizens or hurt poor citizens or both (Goldsmith 2005). Research also finds mixed results and experiences with political uses of deliberation (Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004). Community-based deliberation can sometimes increase knowledge, interest, self-efficacy, communication in new networks, and perhaps even political activity or efforts to obtain political information, and examples of successful deliberation efforts abound. However, the results can vary, sometimes resulting in anger and frustration or disinterest in political participation or mistrust in political institutions.

2.1.3 Money in politics

The research cited above on responsiveness in federal politics and policymaking brings to mind the contentious topic of money in politics. Sums spent by individual presidential candidates far exceed hundreds of millions of dollars. Both major political parties obtained $14.924 million in public funds for the 2004 conventions. Business groups gave 83% of campaign money to incumbents in 2002 and only 4% to challengers, with the remainder going to unopposed candidates. Each of the top 10 industries that donated money to Members of Congress during the 2006 election cycle gave over $14,000,000, and the top industry gave over $58,000,000.

Many observers point to the role of money in politics as a threat to democracy and political equality. The increasing amount of money in politics fuels debate about campaign finance reform and election spending limit debates. Money is related to concerns about incumbent advantages, access and influence, and equality of representation and responsiveness, although some argue that money does not *necessarily* have a negative impact in all these areas. For example, some studies have shown that campaign spending increases voter knowledge (Coleman and Manna 2000). The increase in election costs has been well-documented. Wealthy individuals contribute far more money to campaigns than others (Overton 2004); in fact those with incomes over $125,000 contribute about a third of campaign dollars but comprise 3% of the population (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Legislation to restrict donations to political candidates has often resulted in a funneling of donations through different sources. For example, Political Action Committees (PACs) emerged following the 1947 expansion of legal restrictions on contributions; "soft money" expenditures grew following the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971; and 527 organizations, campaign groups not subject to regulations affecting PACs, provided significant funds for 2004 elections following the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (McCain-Finegold). Shifts in the types of donors may accompany shifts in mechanisms for

contributions; for example, during the 2004 elections, sectors that typically account for PAC dollars did not fund 527s, which were largely financed by wealthy individuals.[12]

An important goal of any efforts to address money in politics should be to reduce the proportion of funds coming from wealthy donors and increase the proportion coming from lower-income individuals (Overton 2004). Candidates sometimes emphasize obtaining smaller contributions from more donors. Overton recommends that contributions of under $100 should make up 75% of funds candidates, parties, and organizations raise and a target of half of the voting age population contributing to campaigns (Overton 2004). The large increase in the first-time donors in the 2004 election is one positive step in this direction, but these donors were still relatively wealthy: the highest proportion giving $100 or less had a household income between $50,000 and $99,999, and the highest proportion giving $500 or more fell in the range of $100,000 to $249,000. Still, nearly a third of first time donors giving the lower amount earned under $50,000 a year (Institute for Politics, Democracy, & the Internet 2006).

Aside from controlling contributions, another route to reducing the sums of money involved in the election process is to restrict spending . The Supreme Court has found restrictions on spending to be an infringement on free speech in a 1976 challenge to the Federal Election Campaign Act. More recently the Court found a Vermont law limiting expenditures to be unconstitutional. Public funding is one mechanism through which spending is limited for primary elections and national party spending for nominees. Eligible presidential primary candidates receive public funds to match the first $250 of each contribution raised from an individual (limited to $2,000). Winning nominees may receive funding for the general election up to a limit if they limit expenditures to funds received and agree not to raise contributions. A declining proportion of Americans contribute to public financing: in recent years only 11% of federal income tax filers, compared to 27.5% in 1975, contributed to the fund. Some candidates opt not to participate in public financing systems.

One of the ways in which citizens participate politically, either individually or joined with others, is to lobby through groups or representatives. Lobbying is therefore one of the important functions of participation, but because representation can be purchased, wealthy individuals and organizations often have disproportionate influence. Lobbyists reported billing 2.0 billion dollars in 2003.[13] Total lobbying spending in 2006 was $2.6 billion. For example, on housing issues realtors and construction have major, well-funded organizations in Washington, while there is no major association of renters.[14] Some constituencies do not have a specific national organization that advocates for their policy priorities. For example, a number of organizations represent the homeless, but they tend not to be as well-funded as others. The types of organizations and issues involved in lobbying have changed over the years (Fisher 2005) with environmental, philosophical and ideological interests added to corporate interests. Today, budget, health, and tax issues are the top three areas in which lobbyists file the most reports. These are followed by trade, defense, transportation, and the environment & superfund.[15]

The bipartisan interest in addressing the role of money in politics and renewed discussion about ethics in policymaking at national and state levels are both encouraging. In addition to continuing to address these issues, it is important to raise citizen awareness of federal financing of campaigns, the option of contributing to presidential campaign financing when filing taxes, and mechanisms through which candidates fund campaigns (Malbin 2006). However, under the current system there is still a great incentive to deny matching federal funds to avoid the constraints of expenditure limits.

2.1.4 Media

Free, independent media are central to strength of a democratic nation. Ideally, the media should bring a range of voices, including underrepresented views and groups, to public debates. They have a role to play in generating interest in political engagement and in increasing the pressure on elected officials to be accountable to those they represent. The type of issues covered by media can influence

[12] Based on a comparison of graphs from Center for Responsive Politics.
[13] Knott, Alex. "Industry of Influence Nets more than $10 Billion." Washington, 2006. Center for Public Integrity. Lobbywatch. <http://www.publicintegrity.org/lobby/report.aspx?aid=675>.
[14] Correspondence with Peter Levine
[15] Each semi-annual filing (mid-year and year-end) is treated as a separate report, and each may mention multiple issues

public awareness and the degree to which government and corporate actions are transparent to the public. They can also help to set the political agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972). The media today are characterized by myriad sources of information (such as multiple news channels on cable and network television) but relatively few companies that produce the content that is delivered through television, radio, and print media channels. As a result, media audiences are fragmented, and as media compete for attention in a crowded field, they may encounter increasing pressure to present softer news coverage or limit coverage to suit consumer tastes and niche audiences.

Citizens must learn how to consume media better, by seeking a variety of information sources, by approaching content critically, and by interaction with news organizations to demand better coverage. Learning to produce media and to ask questions about its production creates more critical thinking. Many states have formally included media literacy objectives in their school curricula (see box on education). Adults also need to improve their proactive efforts and ability to use media to learn about issues and understand the situation of those around them. They can also use media to track ways in which to participate in the economic arena, monitor corporations that produce products they care about, become aware of activities and opportunities to participate in the community. They can become aware of funding issues related to the political advertisements they see. People from all backgrounds should also pressure media to address what they care about and to raise concerns about stereotypical portrayals of individuals and issues or inaccuracies in reporting. Addressing the digital divide is also important to facilitating more even participation (Mossberger, Tolbert, and Stansbury 2003).

The internet has likely enhanced the potential to follow specific legislation or political issues outside of elections as well as to generate and expand political groups. It can expand the potential for providing information and education to citizens about political issues and participation. However, there is some question as to whether the internet can really be grassroots oriented. Scholars have also debated questions related to the internet's potential as a forum for deliberation and particularly whether or not it allows for real interaction and enhanced access to the public sphere; one scholar proposes that the internet could become a way to enhance the quality of representation among voters disenchanted with their national representatives by promoting dialogue that enhances accountability and creating networks of representation (Coleman 1996).

2.1.5 Equality

Contrary to popular belief, there is some evidence that Americans are concerned about economic inequality (McCall 2003), and polling data have long shown that they are concerned about political inequality. Time and money both constrain participation. As seen, wealthier people have the resources to work on campaigns more and contribute more to politicians. Economic insecurity can act as a brake on civic and political engagement as many are forced to spend so much time chasing income that they cannot participate in democratic processes. This concern has been raised regarding women, whose duties in the office and at home contribute to the time crunch (Fraser 1996).

Geography constrains opportunities to express voice and be heard. Though levels of participation can be quite high in concentrated low-income neighborhoods, advocacy targeting local officials in such neighborhoods may not be fruitful because of limited government budgets at this level. Poor transportation and the energy required to cope with everyday life struggles among other factors also operate as barriers. Further, the increasing segregation in American communities among class and race lines makes it more difficult to build coalitions around interests that affect low-income people. Fostering a sense of agency in such contexts requires more than just get-out-the-vote efforts and education about the value of participation. It also points to a need for direct experience of participation that leads to results.

2.2 Increasing Expressions of Voice

> "Where a society contains social and economic injustices, democratic processes often reinforce more than undermine those injustices. …..I think that there is only one way to break this circle: for less privileged social groups to organize and insist that their interests, perspectives and experience be a vibrant part of policy discussion, and for political institutions to take special measures to assure the representation of these groups in decision making processes.

> .....Affirmative measures to assure representation of relative marginalized groups functions then to compensate for an existing political imbalance. ……There are many possible mechanisms for such compensatory representation of hitherto underrepresented groups in political processes. One is to mandate quotas of members of certain groups in legislative bodies or on party lists. Strong support for organizing in civil society together with access to public media is another. "
>
> Young 2006: 3

Participation is facilitated by skills, knowledge, information, the opportunity, time, and for some activities, money. Because the distribution of these resources is uneven across the American population, it is not surprising that the distribution of political activity is also (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 2004). Resources for participation, mobilization, and motivation are all important to participation (Skocpol 2004a). Civic education, the structure of government and political institutions, and laws and regulations about participation can all condition the degree to which people participate. Access to public media and "strong support for organizing in civil society" can facilitate organizing and expressions of voice among less privileged groups (Young 2006). The expected result of participation is also an important factor: if citizens have no reason to expect their voices to be heard or responded to, they have little motivation to participate.

2.2.1 Organized participation: social movements and advocacy groups

What draws people to political participation with others? Shared grievances, notions of citizenship and responsibility, social contact and personal fulfillment, and being asked to participate are among the motivators of membership in groups. However, political organizations today are likely to draw in people who are politically motivated or highly educated. Many drawn to groups already have a specific political agenda, perhaps in part because many opportunities for participation are organized around narrow issues. Thus people may see making a monetary contribution – rather than volunteering their time -- as purchasing representation.[16] Professionalized organizations may come together around an issue and subsequently disband, while its members go on to other organizations (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Many have raised concerns that declining membership in political organizations limits an opportunity to foster interest in participation and develop skills. Union membership declines, for example, are related to a diminishing electorate and greater representation of those with higher status (Radcliffe and Davis 2000). Countries with higher union density tend to have higher rates of voter turnout (Freeman 2003). Unions may mobilize and educate voters. There is also a lack of other institutions that mobilize disadvantaged voters in particular. While political parties may fulfill this goal in other countries, in the U.S. both parties reach out to similarly affluent citizens when recruiting donors and volunteers (Verba 2003). Membership in civic groups and religious organizations that are not necessarily political in focus can help to encourage turnout if the groups emphasize voting (Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel. 2006), and thus if such memberships decline then voting can be seen as less important.

The American Political Science Task Force on Inequality and Democracy (2004) noted in a memo of its findings on Inequalities of Political Voice: "Of the various forms of citizen involvement we have reviewed in this memo, social movements are the most likely to mobilize those who have been outside of politics by dint of resource deprivation" (63). However, despite the emergence of new efforts such as the Global Justice movement, they also noted that "An era when the fruits of prosperity accrue so disproportionately to those at the top of the economic hierarchy has not spawned a social movement on behalf of the economically disadvantaged" (68). To promote human development we must also ask how we can facilitate mobilization and participation in groups and movements among not just those with ready access to skills, resources, and representation. As with other forms of participation, social movements can be tools for change for the already-advantaged as well as the relatively marginalized. Like social movement activity, community organizing as a method of mobilization on a grassroots level offers hope of remedying disadvantages and remedying some of the bias inherent in participation disparities.

[16] See debate between Skocpol and Putnam; for example Theda Skocpol, "Unravelling From Above," The American Prospect no. 25 (March-April 1996): 20-25 (http://epn.org/prospect/25/25-cnt2.html)

2.2.2 Voting

There is evidence that being asked to vote encourages voting. If only those likely to participate are asked to do so, disparities may result. For example, 12% of youth have been personally asked by a campaign, party or group to contribute or work for a candidate, while three times that amount of their elders report similar requests. (Zukin et al 2006). The limited possibilities for drawing uninvolved citizens into political activity are also seen in political party strategy, which often mobilizes an already-active base. Many political organizations focus on mobilizing existing voters or reaching those who are already aware, not on expanding the base of people involved (Task Force on Inequality and Democracy, 2004). At the local level, increasing residential segregation, in economic and racial terms, means many potentially active citizens are unaware of issues confronting people who are unlike them (Macedo and Karpowitz 2006).

Voter IDs

The Help America Vote Act, enacted in 2002, stipulates that states must require identification of *first-time* voters (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2007). As of 2006, 41 states have requirements for proof of different kinds, including signatures and photo IDs (Vercellotti and Anderson, 2006). There has been some interest in expanding this to require ID for all voters, and some state laws do go beyond federal requirements. In 2005, the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform recommended that states accommodate concerns that identification should be required to vote but also take active steps to visit homes in order to diminish the likelihood that voter identification laws disenfranchise voters, particularly poor and minority voters. These suggestions were strongly criticized by many observers and have not been adopted for the most part (Center for Democracy and Election Management, June 2007). Advocates concerned about this issue point out that there is little evidence of fraud or other reasons indicating a need for ID, while there is evidence that people with disabilities, people of color, the elderly, and low-income individuals are less likely to have photo identification. One study, which compared states with more stringent requirements, such as signing one's name and presenting photo or non-photo ID, to states in which one had only to state one's name, found a negative effect of requirements on turnout. The probability of voting was lower overall in the presence of such requirements. Further, it was relatively lower for Latino, African-American, and Asian American voters than whites, with the largest gap between Latino and white voters. The April 2008 U.S. Supreme Court decision to uphold an Indiana state law requiring government-issued photo ID to vote was a milestone in ongoing policy evolution on this matter. The Supreme Court also upheld such a law in Arizona, overturning a lower court

Inconvenience and lack of interest are also related to likelihood of voting. Increased voter requirements, such as more stringent identification rules (see box on Voter ID), have been implemented in many states. Difficulties with registration can have a small negative effect on turnout, according to a study that compared turnout levels in the Presidential election of 2004 in states and counties according to identification requirements (Vercellotti and Andersen 2006). The negative effect of inconvenience is also consistent with common reports from young people that they did not vote because of changing residences (Zukin et al. 2006).

The U.S., with voting procedures that differ across states, has more obstacles to voting than many other nations. Some nations actually require voting or have sanctions or consequences for not voting (such as Australia and Belgium), and in many the government automatically registers all citizens. The experience of a voter hotline set up by National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and the National Council of La Raza in 2004 to serve Latino voters who had questions indicates continuing problems with the implementation of voting. Some callers had trouble receiving provisional ballots or found their names not on the polls and many did not have basic information such as the polling location.

The assurance that each vote will be counted is a foundational principle of democracy. Expressions of concern about the voting process, including fraud and suppression, have grown in recent years,[17] particularly since the 2000 Presidential election. Concern has also been expressed about digital voting and the importance of a paper trail to verify votes. In practice, voting procedures and requirements create obstacles to voting that can indirectly disenfranchise others – by making it economically difficult to vote (since many have to sacrifice paid work hours to do so), making registration

[17] Commission on Federal Election Reform, 2005

difficult, requiring identification at the place of polling (see Box X or voter ID), or not making provisions for people whose first language is not English or people with disabilities. Felons are often disenfranchised, and non-citizens can only vote in a handful of local elections in the U.S.

In Puerto Rico, where voting day is a national holiday, voting rates are much higher (around 78% in Presidential election years) (Freeman 2003) than on the mainland United States, where Puerto Ricans also have a low voting rate. Many other countries such as Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Australia hold elections at the national and in some cases at other levels on holidays created for that purpose or on weekends, and their turnout exceeds that in the U.S.

Other proposals to improve voter turnout include election-day registration (EDR), which would

State Policies to Facilitate Voting

In 2007, Iowa and North Carolina joined the growing list of states allowing Election Day Registration (EDR), and many others states had pending legislation on this topic. Another step states have taken to facilitate voting is to allow online registration; forms are available in forty-one states but must be printed out and submitted by mail or drop-off (aside from Arizona's "EZVoter"). Some states permit online registration status checking or enable voters to search for their polling location online. Below are other examples of state legislation to facilitate voting, all passed in 2007.

Utah –requires that at least one early voting polling place be open within each Senate district.
- establishes a statewide electronic voter information website program
- removes requirement for voters to provide voting precinct number of voter registration form

Texas –accepts email ballots from overseas voters who are members of the armed forces
- renews a pilot program allowing polling places meeting certain standards to permit voters from any part of the county

Tennessee – changes deadline for absentee ballot request from seven to five days before the election
Arkansas - enables voters to transfer registration between counties
Oregon - allows qualified people who live in a shelter park, or motor home to register to vote
- allows email application for absentee ballot
- allow qualified 17 year-olds to register to vote once they are 18 years of age

West Virginia – permits Department of Motor Vehicle identification card in lieu of drivers' license
- permits applications for absentee voting to be distributed and returned by email

Florida - allows voters to pre-register upon turning 17 or acquiring a FL driver's license, whichever occurs earlier
Washington – accepts voter registration applications submitted online provided that applicants have a driver's license or Washington State identification card
North Dakota - diagrams of electronic voting machines will be posted at polling sites and all electors will be extended the ability to request assistance, previously permitted only to those who cannot read English, are blind or otherwise disabled
Louisiana – extends early voting application and conduction period
Nevada – proposes amendment to state constitution to extend voting eligibility to those who are residents of the state for 30 days before the election (current requirement 6 months residency)
Arizona – requires early ballots to be mailed to voters within 48 hours of receiving the request for an early ballot if the request is made within 23 days before the Saturday before the election
Colorado – treats completed federal write-in absentee ballot submitted by an eligible but un-registered voter as both a voter registration form and absentee ballot if it is received by the registration deadline
- permits any eligible elector to apply to be automatically mailed a mail-in ballot each time there is an election in which the elector is permitted to vote

Kentucky – creates an exception to two-minute time period allowed for each voter to occupy a voting booth for disabled persons
Maryland – submits amendment to state citizens to vote on, whereby the amendment would authorize a process to allow qualified voters to vote at polling places in or outside their election districts and on specified days before election date

-Caroline Repko

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allow voters to register on the same day they vote and thus would be especially beneficial to people who move frequently, including young people and those with disabilities or transportation problems that inhibit early registration (Demos). EDR may have a positive effect on voter turnout, though one 2003 study found that get out the vote campaigns and especially door-to-door canvassing may have a greater impact than other measures; turnout was also better in states with open primaries, expanded absentee ballot eligibility, and later registration deadlines (Freeman 2003). In addition efforts are being made to improve the implementation of the National Voter Registration Act enacted in 1993. Debates about voter identification also have an impact on turnout. Get-out-the-vote efforts and other door-to-door canvassing have shown success in mobilizing voters (Green and Gerber 2004). Such efforts should target groups shown to vote in smaller numbers, including low-income voters, young voters, and minorities.

Another way to increase turnout is to re-enfranchise those currently ineligible to vote: surveys show an overwhelming majority of Americans favor giving ex-offenders the right to vote (Brennan Institute). In 2004, 5.4 million Americans could not vote because of state laws that impose restrictions on voting for those with felony convictions (Demos). A number of states have enacted legislation to change this situation. Freeman indicates that about 1% of the voting population cannot vote because of ex-felon status.

2.3 Enhancing Awareness, Skills, and Comprehension through Civic and Service Learning

Civic knowledge can enhance political participation, facilitate learning about civic affairs, build support for tolerance and other democratic values, diminish mistrust of public life, improve the consistency of views, and also help people change their views on specific issues (Galston 2004). However, it is important that civic education be structured in such a way that it does not merely encourage action among those who are already likely to act and in positions of relatively greater privilege, and thus more likely to benefit from political action (Junn 2004). To improve democracy and participation for human development rather than just overall participation levels, efforts to increase interest and skills for participation should emphasize participation of and *responsiveness to* groups who participate at lower levels currently, including low-income, less-educated and younger Americans and women and minorities. In teaching students about participation, educators and curriculum experts should be aware that participation and influence do not always go hand-in-hand. Efforts to increase interest, knowledge, and skills also should include *open conversation* about the American political system that allows space for examining its good and bad features and ways in which it may have disadvantaged some groups or policy concerns. A key aspect of such conversation should be to critically examine the history of American institutions such as the electoral college, which was developed in part to create imbalances in power and restrict votes (see box), and how gradual progress in widening access to participation through efforts such as the Voting Rights Act fits in with that history. As one educator notes: "It is perfectly possible to tell the story of the institutionalisation of democracy, such as it is, and to attempt to practise democratic values, without concealing the exclusions and oppressions that continue to characterise the struggle for democracy" (Frazer 1994: 18).

Examples of the 21 State Laws Enacted in 2007 on Civics Education

- Two states established task forces on civic education
- Connecticut will require students in 4th or 5th grade to complete program of participatory democracy
- Iowa will allow high school students to be appointed as precinct election board members
- Maine changed high school graduation requirements "to ensure each student has opportunity to graduate ready for college, career and citizenship"
- Maryland bill: "Acknowledges federal law establishing Constitution Day and Citizenship Day; provides for celebration in public schools; authorizes county boards to establish programs to teach students about the US and Maryland Constitutions; authorizes programs to include events, opportunity for students to register to vote, and efforts to reinforce curricula."
- Michigan enabled 17 year olds to vote in primary elections
- New Hampshire added civics and economics as areas in which yearly assessment will be made in grades 3-8 and one grade in high school
- Oregon allows 17 year-olds to register (but cannot vote until 18)
- Virginia designated the 3rd week of September "Civics Education Week"
- Washington kicked off a year long education program "empowering teachers to improve history education to provide students with the understanding and skills to be engaged citizens and help them develop an appreciation of their heritage."

Many schools have civic education and/or service learning in their curricula. Civic education often concerns "the development of skills and predispositions to encourage democratic deliberation and social and political action"(Junn 2004: 253). Service learning has been defined as a "curriculum-based community service that integrates classroom instruction with community service activities"(Galston 2001). In addition to these two approaches, Boyte (2003) identifies a third option, which he refers to as civic populism and also as a "public work" perspective (also Hildreth 2003). This type of approach helps participants to become involved in governance and the creation of public goods, and it gives students opportunities to identify problems they want to work on, to create "power maps" and action plans to address them, and to help create goods themselves (see box).

Some educators advocate for "political education," which "requires a growing understanding of the relations between the government and the governed, between those in authority and those subject to authority, between those who exercise power and those who are the victims of power. That understanding requires, in turn, a mastery of the relevant concepts and an application of these to areas of practical living which affect how young people live, the relationships they enter into, the control they exercise over their own lives" (Pring 1999: 83-4). Both this definition and the public works approach include an element of practical relevance to students' lives that enhances learning as well as an awareness not only of the process of policymaking but also the glitches that are encountered in seeking policy change.

Many agree that enhanced efforts are needed to build the skills required for political participation among youth, who may retain attitudes they develop toward politics through adulthood. A number of states have adopted measures to address this concern (see box). A great deal of effort has been directed also to enhancing volunteering activity through the service learning movement. Youth who volunteer may develop skills, an understanding of social problems, and interest in other forms of participation. However, they may also have limited understanding of the impact of government and may see volunteering as an alternative to political participation (Galston 2007). Some educators are interested in bringing together elements of service and civic learning (see box). In terms of economic participation, financial literacy programs are one example of efforts to build skills of young people in order to improve economic security. Unions also are involved in helping their members develop an understanding of basic economic that can improve the ability to participate.

Important Skills for Civic or Political Education

- Awareness of how government and politics work and steps one can take to express political voice.
- An understanding of the history of American political institutions
- Openness to questioning and criticizing authority and government.
- Leadership skills (i.e., speaking, leading meetings, negotiating, deliberating, building alliances, interviewing, writing, holding each other accountable, conducting issue research, shaping projects, and listening).
- The ability to handle and think about controversy and to approach issues critically and thoughtfully.
- An awareness of the concepts and effects of power, diversity, and politics.
- An ability to analyze social problems and consider their root causes.
- Skills in media literacy.

Sources: AMLA (http://www.amlainfo.org/media-literacy/definitions), Boyte 2003, 2005, Junn 2004, Pring 1999

Service activities can become opportunities to help students think through how the problems they work to address might be prevented and to stimulate critical thinking and political interest and engagement. While some research indicates that young people sometimes prefer volunteering to political engagement because of negative attitudes toward government or that service participation may not contribute to greater political involvement, other studies have shown that political interest can grow through service activities. Volunteering and political engagement activities can lead students to reflect about and develop skills to address the root causes of problems – including policies and political structures - as well as immediate need. The box "Important Skills for Civic or Political Education" presents elements of both civic and service learning that might encourage participation for human development. Many have been found through research to enhance effectiveness in achieving learning outcomes or have been recommended by experts. One of the most important themes is leading students to reflect on the values inherent in democracy and the values that are

Creative Approaches to Service and Civic Learning for Students

Public Works Approaches

Democracy requires more than voting, and groups like Public Achievement are working to give young people a chance to learn about fuller civic engagement from an early age. The program, run out of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Minnesota, helps young people – from undergrads to grade-schoolers – get together in "teams" (together with "coaches") to take action on issues that teams feel are important – from organizing a public forum on landmines, to painting grafitti-stained bathrooms, to meeting with a school administrator to plan a recycling program. The idea is to help young people develop a sense of shared purpose with their peers and their communities, to learn about the political processes through which public goods are created, and to see that service "by the public, for the public, and in the public" can be a rewarding way to seal that bond.

Media Literacy for Political Participation

Media literacy, according to The Alliance for a Media Literate America, "consist of a series of communication competencies, including the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages." It helps people to critically approach media and develop an understanding of how it is created as well as skills to create it. Media literacy, which has been incorporated into many states' curricula, can be build important skills they need to be fully participating citizens. Important dimensions of media literacy include encouraging students to raise critical questions when viewing television news and to learn about how journalism and news production work. A new curriculum called "Learning Democracy" developed by FairVote includes a media literacy component that includes exercises such as analysis of political advertisements on television and raising awareness of news sources beyond television. Other elements of the curriculum go beyond voter education to help students learn about a range of forms of active political participation in which they can engage and to see connections between community involvement and political action. In addition, the curriculum encourages learning and thinking about political systems in other countries and systemic reforms that have been proposed for the American system.

important to helping all Americans flourish, and to consider how the current American political system does or does not respond to these values or produce equality of participation and response to it.

Conclusion

This paper has presented some evidence that levels and types of participation vary along the lines of education, income, and age (and to a lesser degree sex, race and ethnic group, and citizenship status), and response to participation varies systematically. Money in politics raises serious questions about disparity in influence. Marginalized groups, such as immigrants and prisoners who have committed felons, experience barriers to political participation. Variation also exists in social and economic participation. This paper has addressed to a very limited degree the important topic of how systems for participation facilitate or create obstacles to participation, in terms of voting and campaign finance. It has addressed to a more limited degree the structure of American democracy and systemic contributors to inequality. The greater number and weight of well-funded interest groups and individuals and the limited participation of many citizens mean that the issues on which society focuses can be skewed, leading to a "mobilization of bias"(Schattschneider 1960). On the other hand, the range of opportunities for participation in political, civic, and economic life offers real potential for fuller inclusion of all Americans in efforts to achieve human development.

One area this paper does not address is long-term change to the fundamental organization of the American political system. Scholars debate whether features of American democracy, such as a winner-take-all system (in which winning candidates do not have to gain a majority of votes but simply the highest number), the congressional/presidential system, the party system, and the Electoral College (see box), impact turnout, motivation to participate, and outcomes through their effect on the way in which votes count, political offices are won, and representation allocated. Although discussion of the range of proposals that have been made related to these issues is outside of the scope of this paper, their consideration should be a part of any serious discussion of improving participation. It is also important to be aware that changes on this scale would be very difficult to achieve. There is no easy solution to achieving fuller and more equally distributed participation or to improving the policies and processes that shape it. Here we have presented suggestions for facilitating voting (just one of many forms of political participation) and contributing to thoughtful approaches to education. Social movements are also an important avenue for change, and fostering organized political activity among relatively less advantaged individuals is critical to promoting human development. This paper has also raised concerns and questions about representation and responsiveness, the media, money in politics, and inequality. The disparities in participation and

Electoral College

Eager to protect a delicate balance of power between states, leery of ceding too much control to the central government, and wary of the risks of turning over such an important decision to the people, the framers of the US Constitution established that the election of the president would be made not by popular vote, but rather by a small body of delegates representing the states. These days, the Electoral College system, as it has come to be known, is increasingly under attack as unrepresentative and distortionary.

The problem lies mainly in the way states award their electoral votes -- the winner-take-all-method. Almost all states award all of their electoral votes, ranging from three to California's 55, to the candidate receiving the most votes in the state's popular vote. This means that candidates have no incentive to be concerned about voters in states that they are unlikely to win or lose, and, similarly, these same potential voters are less likely to see their vote as having any practical value. So candidates focus on a handful of "battleground states" – only 16 in 2004 – where the outcome is up-in-the-air, and virtually ignore the rest. The system also means that a candidate can lose the national popular vote, but win the presidency through the Electoral College -– it has happened three times, including in 2000. Finally, the winner-take-all-method is disastrous for third parties; Ross Perot won 19 percent of the nationwide vote in 1992, but not a single electoral vote.

Seven hundred proposals have been introduced in Congress to reform or eliminate the Electoral College over the last 200 years, but Constitutional amendments don't come easy. With that in mind, a bipartisan group called National Popular Vote is targeting the state level, promoting a bill whereby all of a state's electoral votes would go to the winner of the national popular vote. An inter-state compact, the bill would take effect only when enacted by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes. In April 2007, Maryland became the first state to pass the bill, which currently is endorsed by 769 state legislators.

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http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/faq.html#history
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/14/opinion/14sat3.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/pages/explanation.php

influence are just one of many good reasons to seek to reduce the parallel inequalities in American society.

Scholars will continue to study important questions such as: How are the quality and results of participation conditioned by skills and knowledge, media, and policies and practices that shape government and society? What happens when people participate? Are voices heard, and is there a response to all of them? Does participation change the terms and issues of public debate? Learning more about these questions is important to efforts to improve participation. As we consider how to improve human development, we must also continue to explore questions only partially answered by this paper, such as:

- Under what circumstances does participation promote human development and under what circumstances does it not?
- What measures can support organizing in civil society or mobilization of less privileged members of society?
- What kinds of participation are most likely to promote human development?
- What practices or institutions constrain participation?
- In the patterns of participation in the U.S. today, what constrains human development?
- What opportunities exist to expand participation and inclusion in terms of the abilities citizens have to participate, the quality of and equality of participation and exchange, and the effectiveness of participation?
- How can we increase and improve results of participation in political, economic, and social and civic realms so that unheard voices may join in?

Expanding and improving the equality, quality, and influence of participation across all groups in society and the effectiveness of responses to participation is a crucial part of the steps we can take toward improving human development in the United States.

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