Public Libraries and Democracy:
The Library's Effect on Civic Engagement

by

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Abstract

The modern public library is an agency that has grown out of the uniquely American democratic experience. Moreover, many in the profession tout these organizations as bastions of democracy. The key arguments contend that libraries: provide universal access to information (the currency of democracy), support First Amendment rights via stringent non-censorship policies, and provide a meaningful civic space for community members to interact with one another. Further, evidence for these claims comes in the way of the historical accounts, current guiding principles of the library profession, as well as Supreme Court case law that has established the public library as a public forum. However, questions still remain as to whether or not these agencies have any direct impact on the fundamental element of democracy—participation.

During 2012 and 2013 a two-phase study was undertaken to investigate public libraries and civic engagement. The first phase involved an organizational analysis of Alabama public libraries that exposed variations and, more importantly, a *range of library civicness*. Findings show that the civicness of a library is closely associated with several factors that define the socioeconomic status of the communities they serve. In effect, as library scholars often posit, public libraries truly are a reflection of those communities that create them. The second phase of this research utilized a library user survey geared at the transition of this research to the individual level of analysis. Findings from this phase confirm findings from the first phase, as well as provide an additional nuanced understanding of the public library's impact on users' via a model of *library-augmented civic engagement* (LACE).

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2SLS	Two-Stage Least Squares
APLS	Alabama Public Library Service
CAS	Civic Array Score
CI	Community Information
CTG	Cognitive Testing Group
CVM	Civic Voluntarism Model
CWA	Concerned Women for America
EAS	Educational Attainment Score
FDLP	Federal Depository Library Program
Glasgow Declaration	The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom
GPO	Government Publications Office
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services
LACE	Library-Augmented Civic Engagement
LFS	Likert-Based Frequency Score
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
RC	Rational Choice
RLC	Range of Library Civicness
SES	Socioeconomic Status

SID	Survey Identification
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (software)
SQ	Survey Question
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

Chapter 1 – Introduction

There is a prevalent view within the literature of librarianship that public libraries are organizations that support traditional democratic ideals. Further, the evidence cited in support of this view falls within three major categories: historical, professional, and statutory. Proponents of the historical view claim that public libraries support democracy because they were founded to do so (historical precedence). Others note this traditional mission is further buttressed by the professional commitment of librarians to support such ideals, as evidenced by several widely-accepted professional mandates and mission statements. Still others point to the statutory support provided to public libraries in the pursuit of their traditional democratic mission to provide free and open access to the widest variety of information and ideas.

However, even with supporting evidence to back each of these perspectives, questions still remain as to the true democratic value of public libraries. For example, the historical perspective is merely emblematic of a normative democratic mission within the field. While there is ample evidence to suggest that the American public library was indeed founded to serve an egalitarian mission, little empirical evidence exists to validate the effectiveness of that aim. Yes, public libraries provide free and open access to information, but what affect, if any, does this service have on the American democratic process?

Similarly, it is possible to question the professional support that exists for the library's traditional democratic mission. While some scholars trumpet the strong support public libraries provide to democratic culture (e.g., Byrne, 2003; Heanue, 2003; Kranich, 2001, 2005, and 2010; Kretchmer, 2001; Milam, 2001; et al.), others note the erosion of this democratic mission in the face of fiscal constraints and dwindling library usage. In particular, several scholars note the public library's shifting service focus that witnesses education and enlightenment taking a

secondary role to mindless entertainment (e.g, Arko-cobbah, 2006; Buschman, 2003; D'Angelo, 2006; Hafner, 1993; McCabe, 2001). This *problem of purpose*, as it has become known, leads to a situation in which even librarians are unable to identify the purpose and value of public libraries.

Even the statutory support that public libraries currently enjoy is unable to provide a completely stable foundation for its democratic mission. While the courts have endorsed certain democratic functions of the public library, this support is subject to change as social and political values change. Consider that public libraries have existed even under the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, as well as today's Iran and China. Moreover, in these instances any claim that the public library is serving democratic ideals becomes more problematic. In fact, when considering the statutory perspective from this viewpoint, it is clear that the public library only functions in the manner it is allowed[1]. The public library does not dictate law, and in this way cannot be said to be innately democratic. With one new law, statutory support for the democratic mission of the public library can be weakened significantly or collapse completely.

Considering these criticisms, it makes sense to look for some deeper democratic value provided by the American public library. Looking to the literature of political science provides such an opportunity. This dissertation examines the public library's support for civic engagement among library users via a multi-phase, quantitative research study aimed at answering the question: *In what ways, if any, do public libraries augment those social elements that lead to greater civic engagement?* In answering this question, this research offers an empirical investigation of the public library's ability to generate those elements required for a functioning

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[1] A caveat worth noting: Considering the libraries in the broadest sense, one might argue that intrepid librarians who work under oppressive regimes, are able in some ways to keep the flame of democratic access to information lit—if only dimly. In this way, public libraries, as a social construct, can perhaps always be branded as democratic.

democratic culture—namely active participation by the public in matters of a civic or political nature.

It makes sense to examine the connection between public libraries and civic engagement for a few reasons. First, consider the words of Rose (1954) who states:

> The public libraries in this country are not the concern merely of professional librarians, but of the general public whose property they are. Here is a vital educational agency, no less significant in training for citizenship that the schools and the universities—rather one with them in this objective. The general public needs to know whether the condition of this agency is healthy, whether it is growing and improving. So this agency should be judged, not only by what it is accomplishing, but also according to the measure of its capabilities. Such judgment must be based in part on knowledge of background facts. (p. 9)

Second, as was previously mentioned, there is a long-running discourse concerning the public library's connection to democracy. However, a gap exists in this discussion that concerns what is arguably the most important aspect of democracy, which is civic engagement (civic and political participation). While librarianship has engaged in a thorough investigation of the public library's support for democratic ideals as viewed from historical, professional, and legal perspectives, there exists no empirical data to help explain the functional nature of this support. That is to say, there are no predictive models that might help administrators within the public library setting sustain or retool service offerings or collections to benefit the vibrancy of civic life within the communities they serve.

An investigation of public libraries and civic engagement can address the *problem of purpose* alluded to earlier. For if such a problem exists, merely trumpeting the library's

endorsement of democratic ideals is not enough to rectify it. This is not to say the democratic mission should be abandoned, but rather that it should be expanded as several have suggested (e.g., Buschman, 2003; Hafner, 1993; McComb, 2001a, 2001b). Moreover, in determining the best direction for expansion it makes sense to ask the question: *In what way might the public library best serve democracy?*

The fact is that democracy, as a practical regime, necessarily requires citizen involvement with the processes of governance (Dahl, 1956, 2000). *Demos kratia*, the primordial root of the term democracy, comes from the Greek words for *power, or authority, of the people* and has since been interpreted as *the people ruling themselves* (Dunn, 2006; Harrison, 1995). The implication is that democracy necessarily requires action, which results in that regime's self-perpetuation. So while mimicry of, or adherence to, a set of democratic values or principles relating to civil rights, for example, might rightfully be described as the support of democracy, such support might also be viewed as merely symbolic. That is to say, such "support" rests precariously on the society's ledge of reason. The truth is that this sort of symbolic support is quite susceptible to reversal. Indeed, there would be more cause to heap praise on the democratic support provided via public libraries if instead such support was shown to also encompass promotion of civic engagement, or what amounts to the active perpetuation of democratic culture.

<center>Importance of Studying the Issue</center>

This dissertation speaks to both the potential and actual role of public libraries in service to democracy, with implications for the fields of librarianship and political science. In illustrating how these agencies support civic engagement, this study provides evidence that helps the library profession to sustain or even expand this support. At the same time, research that helps to exhibit

any benefits associated with public libraries provides an argument in favor of continued support for these agencies across all communities.

With regard to its importance to political science, this research contributes to the discourse on civic engagement through the examination of a public agency that is ubiquitous within American culture, yet has remained unexamined within the literature. This provides an additional dimension to the literature that has addressed the effects other organizations have on civic engagement. Additionally, this research expands on the work of Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995), which offers a theoretically rich predictive model[2] of civic engagement that has yet to be expanded upon in any significant way.

<center>Overview of Past Research</center>

While it would surely prove an overwhelming task to fully explore the concept of democracy here, it is important to provide for at least a rudimentary understanding. Discussing the meaning of democracy, Shapiro (1997) notes that the matter is necessarily complex because democracy "…means different things to different people. Sometimes it is identified with a particular decision rule, at other times it conjures up the spirit of an age" (p. 211). Further, there exists a cleavage between what can be termed *procedural* versus *substantive* democracy—or rules-centered versus outcomes-centered popular governance (Shapiro, 1997). Dahl (2000) also notes that confusion often arises with regard to the subject of democracy when individuals fail to recognize that democracy exists in both ideal and practical forms. Whereas the ideal form is defined by a set of philosophical ideals or value judgments, the practical form takes shape in the real-world implementation of such ideals and values.

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[2] The Civic Voluntarism Model

A second cause for complexity stems from democracy's ancient origins. Democracy is a concept that is at least 2,500 years in the making (Crossman, 1939; Dahl, 1989; Woodruff, 2006). Moreover, it has evolved over that long period. Indeed, several cultures have adopted some form of what is termed in the modern era as *democratic* governance. Moreover, the reasons for, and unique manner in which, each society implemented democratic socio-political elements into their culture, differs significantly. The ancient Greeks invoked *demokratia*[3] differently from the ancient Romans (Crossman, 1939; Hansen, 1999; Hornblower, 1991; Jones, 2008; Lipset, 2001; Rhodes, 2004; Shapiro, 2003); who did it differently than their northern medieval brethren a few centuries later (Crawford, 1993; Flower, 2004; Millar, 2002; Wood, 1988); who did it differently than the Founding Fathers of the United States (US) over a millennium later (Dahl, 1956, 1989, and 2000; Dunn, 1992; Harrison, 1995); who did it differently than contemporary Americans (Dahl, 2000; Dunn, 2005; Harrison, 1995; Rohr, 1986). In this way, democracy is truly an organic concept defined in part by the general idea of popular sovereignty, and in part by a changing set of social values that, while based on a philosophical canon, arise from the practical implementation of those ideals in necessarily less-than-ideal situations (Dahl, 2000).

Understanding the complexity that is implicit in any discussion that invokes democracy, this dissertation, in the interest of clarity, identifies the American incarnation of this concept as its primary focus—what Dahl (1956) identifies as the first modern form of democracy, which is built upon the *Madisonian theory of democracy*. In addition, this dissertation sidesteps the question of procedural vs. substantive democracy noted by Shapiro (1997), and instead focuses on the more general notion of practical democracy, as identified by Dahl (2000).

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[3] Demokratia, or democracy, comes from the Greek words for *power or authority* (*kratos*) and *the people of a community* (*demos)*, which has since been translated as *the people with authority to rule themselves* (Lane, p. xiii; Dunn, 2005; Harrison, 1995).

As previously mentioned, there are three bodies of evidence most often utilized to label the American public library as democratic. First, many note the democratic intent, and therefore democratic foundation, on which the modern public library is established (e.g., Ditzion, 1947; Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993a; Shera, 1949). In particular, these scholars cite an egalitarian push for social improvement connected to libraries, most directly championed by Francis Wayland, Edward Everett, George Ticknor, and Andrew Carnegie (Bobinski, 1966; Byrne, 2003; D'Angelo, 2006; Ditzion, 1947; Shera, 1949). The first three men were key players in the establishment of Boston Public Library, which is considered by most as the first *modern public library*[4] in the US (Ditzion, 1947; Shera, 1949). Andrew Carnegie is the man who furthered this mission by providing the funding and the administrative know-how needed to spread the idea of tax-supported libraries across the US (Bobinski, 1966; Byrne, 2003; D'Angelo, 2006).

The second body of evidence relates to ongoing professional support of the library's traditional democratic mission. Three professional declarations help to form the boundaries of this support: The American Library Association's (ALA) *Library Bill of Rights*; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *Public Library Manifesto*; and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) *Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom* (Glasgow Declaration) (Byrne, 2003). Moreover, it is believed by some that as the profession of librarianship supports democratic ideals, so too can it be said that public libraries support such ideals.

The statutory support for the public library's traditional democratic mission provides yet another body of evidence to consider. An examination of case law pertaining to First Amendment protections illustrates how the core function of public libraries, information and idea

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[4] The modern public library is distinguished from early libraries by its funding through tax support.

protection and dissemination, relates to foundational American democratic values (Hafner &

Sterling-Folker, 1993b). Moreover, several cases specific to libraries reinforce these ideas more

concretely, while setting a clear precedent for the US Government's recognition of public

libraries as public fora (Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993b; Kretchmer, 2001).

However, in spite of these three bodies of evidence, many have noted the democratic

shortcomings of these agencies. Some attack the professional missions and decrees[5] as

unrealistic and insufficient (Baldwin, 1996; Frické, Mathiesen, and Fallis, 2000). Others speak of

a *problem of purpose* or *crisis in librarianship* that is most notably defined by the loss of civic

space within the library and the promotion of corporate service models aimed at meeting the

public's demand for mindless entertainment (Buschman, 2003; D'Angelo, 2006; Hafner &

Sterling-Folker, 1993a; McCabe, 2001a, 2001b). Of course, there are still some who continue to

claim the public library's relevance in the face of such criticisms. These individuals note that

public libraries reinforce civil society through, for example, the provision of important

government and community information (Durrance, Pettigrew, Jourdan, and Scheuerer, 2001;

Heanue, 2001).

Although the foundational, professional, and statutory bodies of evidence do make valid

cases for the public library to be seen as a buttress for democratic ideals, the *problem of purpose*

does provide ample cause for concern. Indeed, in the face of changing values among their users,

which have forced many libraries to alter services in order to remain relevant, one sees the

traditional democratic mission under threat. Further, the statutory support given to libraries is

always subject to change. All it takes is one court decision to undo precedent. Understanding

this, one might ask: *What's next? Where do libraries go from here? What new directions can this*

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[5] i.e., the *Library Bill of Rights*, the *Glasgow Declaration*, and *Public Library Manifesto*

discourse take? In answering these questions, it is appropriate to first look back to democracy—in particular, aspects of democracy that have not yet been examined within the literature.

One topic that has remained relatively untouched by scholars is that of the public library's potential effect on civic engagement. *Civic engagement* has been defined several ways within previous literature. "Scholars use civic engagement to describe activities ranging from bowling in leagues to watching political television shows, writing checks to political advocacy groups, and participating in political rallies and marches. For many journalists, public officials, and political activists, civic engagement can mean everything from charitable giving to associational membership, political participation, artistic expression, or community service" (Berger, 2011, p. 2). However, for the purposes of this exposition, civic engagement is used in its most general sense to mean an individual's active participation in matters of a civic or political nature.

As previously stated, the importance of participation to the democratic regime is implicit. Popular governance, by definition, requires action from the community which aims to govern itself. Moreover, in this fact one finds the primary justification for a study of participation, or civic engagement, among community members. A secondary justification then arises in the fact that variations in participation are not completely understood. Over the last 150 years the ranks of those able to vote in the US have more than doubled with suffrage extended to women and racial minorities. However, participation of these groups remains lower than the Anglo-White male (Brody, 1978; Clemens, 1999; Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993; Verba et al., 1995). In addition, variances in participation can be seen across the socioeconomic spectrum with the affluent and well-educated participating more than the undereducated of less financial means (Brody, 1978; Clemens, 1999; Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993; Verba et al., 1995).

Several models have been proposed to explain such variances. While the socioeconomic status (SES) model offers a tremendous predictive power, its theoretical and explanatory power leaves much to be desired (Verba et al., 1995). On the other hand, the rational choice model of participation, which links participation to self-interest, offers a great deal of theoretical and explanatory power, but falls short in its ability to predict participation (Verba et al., 1995). As Ozymy (2012) notes: "It is often the case that individuals fail to understand what is in their best interest or act out of self-interested concerns, and the question of whether self-interest motivates political action is still open to debate" (p. 104).

Pulling together aspects of both the SES and rational choice models, the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) aims to explain, as well as predict, participation on the basis of the three key components: *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* (Verba et al., 1995). *Resources*, in this context, equates to the time, money, or civic skills that help an individual to participate more effectively. *Political engagement*, or simply *engagement*, relates to an individual's interest in matters of a political nature. Lastly, *recruitment* pertains to an individual's contact with active recruitment networks—social networks in which one might be asked to participate in a civic or political activity.

Variations Across Public Libraries

Nearly 60 years ago, Rose (1954) noted: "The steps of the progress of the American public library have been experimental, tentative, and responsive to local need. Inevitably, then, their development has been uneven and presents today a lack of uniformity which bewilders librarians themselves and is highly misleading to people in general" (pp. 9-10). Even through casual observance, today one can clearly identify a similar variance in public library collections, services, and facilities. The fact is that tax revenue, as well as community support and demand,

differ across communities. Therefore, libraries will differ across communities. Further, if these aspects vary, one would expect that any social phenomena associated with libraries might also vary. For these reasons it is appropriate to begin this study by demarcating those variances and discussing their potential influence on library service.

A testable model of *library-augmented civic engagement* (LACE) connects the literature of librarianship with that of political science by building off the work of Verba et al. and their CVM. Moreover, the LACE model places the public library in contact with those key elements and processes defined by the CVM, linking library usage to opportunities for individuals to feed political and civic interests, build civic skills, and make contact with active recruitment networks.

Research Objectives

This dissertation investigates the manner in which public libraries affect the civic engagement by answering the research question: *In what ways, if any, do public libraries augment those social elements that lead to greater civic engagement?* However, before this question can be answered, one key aspect of public libraries must be addressed. In particular, this research utilizes a two-phase approach that first defines the level of variation that exists across libraries with regard to their support for those activities known to promote civic engagement. In embarking on an investigation of such variations, this dissertation offers the following two hypotheses:

H_1: Public libraries are a reflection of the communities they support, and therefore vary across communities. Their offerings are directly affected by available monetary resources, which are directly affected by the overall socio-economic condition of the community itself.

H_2: Due to various factors, most notably the socioeconomic condition of the communities they serve, the "civicness" of public libraries, as defined by their provision of those services that are theoretically linked to increased levels of civic engagement among individuals, differs across communities.

During the second phase of this study the level of analysis shifts from the library to the individual library user. A self-administered survey of public library users is utilized to gather data during this phase that provide a better means of investigating any causal effects libraries have on civic engagement, which is mostly defined by activities that occur at the individual level of analysis. This phase of the research tests two additional hypotheses:

H_3: Through their provision of information, services, and facilities, public libraries augment the required elements of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* outlined in the CVM described by Verba et al.

H_4: The level of a library's influence on users' civic engagement is dependent upon said library's level of CVM element augmentation (the civicness of said library).

Data & Methodology

This research utilizes several different data sources and analytical techniques in testing the hypotheses listed above. First, secondary data gathered by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and US Census Bureau in 2010 is paired with data gathered via an original content analysis of Alabama public library websites. Univariate and bivariate analyses are used to flesh out the aforementioned *range of library civicness*. This range is then used as a sampling frame to select three libraries for more in-depth study in the second phase of this research—one library from the low, one from the middle, and one from the high end of the *range of library civicness*.

In the second phase of this study a self-administered library user survey gathers individual-level data at each of the three library sites selected for further study. This 49-question survey collects data concerning individuals': library usage patterns, involvement in political and non-political participatory activity (*civic engagement*), as well as socioeconomic and demographic identity. Once again, univariate and bivariate analyses are used to expose important relationships between key variables. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, as well as two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression[6], provide a means to model causality within these data.

Several findings surface as a result of these analyses. First, in addition to a *range of library civicness*, the first phase of this study is also able to show how public libraries exist as a reflection of the communities they serve. This finding poses implications for the study of any individual-level effect public libraries have on civic engagement. During the second phase of this study the socioeconomic model of civic engagement is shown to be an ineffective predictor of civic engagement among library users. Contrarily, this phase also illustrates the CVM of Verba et al. to be a good predictor of such activity. Finally, and model of library-augmented civic engagement (LACE), described in detail at the end of Chapter 2, is shown to have inversely relational predictive power that is most effective on the higher end of the *range of library civicness*.

Summary of Subsequent Chapters

In the following chapters, the democratic support provided by public libraries is examined in greater detail. Chapter 2 reviews the literature of both librarianship and political science, as it pertains to the subject at hand. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the reviewed literature and the offering of a model of library-augmented civic engagement (LACE).

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[6] 2SLS regression is used to control for any endogeneity within the model. This will be explained in greater detail in later chapters.

Chapter 3 provides a description of all methodologies used in this study. This chapter speaks to those methods used to formulate a *range of library civicness*, as well as test a causal model of civic engagement among library users. Analytical obstacles associated with multicollinearity and endogeneity seen in this research, as well their solutions, are also discussed.

Chapter 4 details findings from the first phase of this research, which takes the form of an organizational analysis of Alabama public libraries. This chapter provides a full descriptive analysis of populations across Alabama and the libraries that serve them. Bivariate analysis is used to explore relationships between communities and libraries. This culminates in a discussion of the variations that exist across public libraries, and specifically the *range of library civicness* which provides for causal implications at the individual level of analysis.

Chapter 5 details findings from the second phase of this research, which investigates the individual-level causal effect public libraries have on civic engagement. This chapter uses univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses to explore two explanatory models of civic engagement mentioned in the previous literature. The LACE model proposed herein is then explored via similar means. Problems and solutions associated with multicollinearity and endogeneity in data gathered by this study are also discussed.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides closing thoughts and conclusions related to the findings of this study. This chapter speaks to the value of this research in the fields of librarianship and political science. Potential next steps along this line of inquiry are also discussed.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Defining Democracy

Before discussing any relationship that might exist between democracy and public

libraries, it is important to garner a basic understanding of democracy itself. First, it is important

to address the complexity of democracy, which is driven by its very nature as a social construct.

As Dahl (2000) notes: "When we discuss democracy perhaps nothing gives rise to more

confusion than the simple fact that 'democracy' refers to both an ideal and an actuality" (Dahl,

2000, p. 26). On the one hand, ideal democracy takes shape as a collection of social philosophies

centered on defining the intrinsic value and rights of both the single individual as well as the

community that is comprised of many individuals. Contrarily, the practical form of democracy

takes shape as rules, or laws, geared toward putting democratic ideal into practice.

Another cause for complexity stems from the fact that democracy is a concept that has

existed and evolved over the past 2,500 years (Crossman, 1939; Dahl, 1989; Woodruff, 2006).

This adds many layers of meaning and practice that is summed up nicely by Shapiro (1997) in

his statement that democracy "has meant different things to different people." Traditional[7]

narratives have democracy first surfacing within Ancient Greece, and specifically the city-state

of Athens (Crossman, 1939; Dahl, 1989; Harrison, 1995; Jones, 2008; Lipset, 2001; Robinson,

2004; Woodruff, 2006). Democratic values forged here were then passed on to the Ancient

Roman Republic. Interestingly, by the time Rome had migrated from a monarchy to a republic,

the idea of democracy had been tarnished a great deal by the missteps of the Athenians (Dunn,

2005; Santas, 2001). This disdain, for what was effectively interpreted as mob rule, or the

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[7] More recently, criticisms of the traditional democratic narratives that propose a Hellenistic democratic
provenance have surfaced. These criticisms point to the probable existence of democratic cultures of Asia and the
Middle East that predate the tradition which began in Ancient Greece. (Schemeil, 2000)

uneducated rule of the poor, can be seen quite clearly in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca (Dunn, 2005; Monoson, 2000; Samaras, 2002; Shapiro, 2003; Wolheim, 1958). Moreover, it was the failings of direct democracy that led to the formulation of representative modes of popular governance (Dahl, 1989; Dunn, 2005).

Fortunately, as complex as democracy is, both historically and conceptually, a great deal of this complexity can be circumvented by identifying a single brand of democracy on which to focus. Here, with the American public library as the focus of this dissertation, it makes sense to focus on that brand of democracy most readily associated with the American political process. To be clear, this form of democracy takes shape as a representative government set within the framework of popular political support expressed, most notably, through an electoral process aimed at the selection of the representatives who are charged with lawmaking (Dahl, 2000; Shapiro, 1997, 2003). This practical, or functional, side of the regime is guided by both statute, as well as popular opinion.

Of course, it is also important to recognize the American democratic ideal, which holds as its highest purpose the pursuit of a set of principles founded equally on the liberalism of Locke and the republicanism of Rousseau. This system of governance attempts to balance the innate human rights of the individual with the best interest, or *common good*, of society as a whole. Further, it attempts to accomplish this through the provision of opportunities for: effective participation, equality in voting, gaining enlightened understanding, exercising final control over the public agenda, and the political inclusion of all adults (Dahl, 2000). Dahl (1956) calls this balanced approach a *Madisonian theory of democracy*.

The Public Library's Connection to Democracy

The connection between the American public library and democratic practice is one forged by egalitarian cultural movements tied to education and social progress. The historical accounts of public library development provided via Shera (1949) establish the public library's support of democratic values as far back as colonial America and the desire of colonials to study religious texts without fear of persecution. As time passed, these first communal book collections would evolve into lending libraries meant to serve growing populations (Shera, 1949). Further, this evolution was most notably driven by the mission of establishing universal, tax-supported public education (McCook, 2001). "Shera identifies four factors in particular that link the movement for universal schooling and the movement for tax-supported public libraries:

- A growing awareness of the ordinary man and his importance to the group

- A conviction that universal literacy is essential to an enlightened people

- A belief in the practical value of the technical studies

- An enthusiasm for education for its own sake" (McCook, 2001, p. 30)

"In *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture*, Sidney Ditzion outlines the complex cultural milieu that birthed the American public library" (Stielow, 2001). Embarking on his description of the cultural foundations of the modern public library, Ditzion (1947) states: "The social and intellectual currents in any period form the natural background against which we must place a particular institutional manifestation. The conditions under which people live, the technological changes of the age and the economic structure of society supply the raw elements from which a people must always choose its materials for societal construction" (Ditzion, 1947, p. 9). He goes on further to clarify how an understanding of the social, political, and cultural movements of the 19th century help to explain the formation of the modern public library.

The push of liberalism in early 1800s was reshaping the theological, as well as political landscapes of America. Shera (1949) explains that that this movement "…was more than a creed or doctrine; its motives were based on the conscious assumption that *(a)* man is by nature good and intelligent, *(b)* every truth can be rationalized, *(c)* no institution is sacred, and *(d)* the living generation has a right to make whatever changes it pleases….Americans had been told their manners were uncouth, their literature sterile, and their libraries empty (pp. 87-89)."
It was, in part, the desire to prove the nation's collective worth to outsiders that led to many social developments of that time, including those that ushered in the Industrial Revolution, which Ditzion (1947), Rose (1954), and Thomson (1952) all agree had a profound effect on the development of the modern public library in America—particularly the idea of using taxes as a source for funding.

In addition to transformative social movements, three Boston intellectuals, Francis Wayland, Edward Everett, and George Ticknor, were particularly responsible for the injection of democratic ideals into the public library movement (Ditzion, 1947). Wayland, once President of Brown University, was an early proponent of a tax-supported public education system (Ditzion, 1947). "Inasmuch as the tax burden was distributed over the entire population, thought Wayland, no parent should have to seek beyond the public system for the best possible educational advantages….[Further,] equal rights could be secured, Wayland maintained, only on the basis of intelligence and virtue" (Ditzion, 1947, p. 10).

As a supplement to a public school system, Wayland believed that a public library would ensure individuals' access to the knowledge necessary to progress and achieve throughout their life (Ditzion, 1947). It was with for this reason that he advocated the passage of law in Massachusetts granting towns the ability to gather taxes for the creation and maintenance of

public libraries (Ditzion, 1947). Speaking to this point further, Ditzion (1947) notes that the entire social approach to the public library movement is on display in the preamble to Massachusetts Library Law, which reads:

> Whereas, a universal diffusion of knowledge among the people must be highly conducive to the preservation of their freedom, a greater equalization of social advantages, their industrial success, and their physical, intellectual and moral advancement and elevation: and Whereas, it is requisite to such a diffusion of knowledge that while sufficient means of a good early education shall be furnished to all the children in the Common Schools, ample and increasing sources of useful and interesting information should be provided for the whole people in the subsequent and much more capable and valuable periods of life: and Whereas, there is no way in which this can be done do effectively, conveniently and economically as by the formation of Public Libraries, in the several cities and towns of this Commonwealth, for the use and benefit of all their respective inhabitants. (pp. 18-19)

Along with the practical intellectual value represented the information public libraries can provide, Wayland also noted the power of intellectualism over the baser aspects of the human character—in essence, noting the moral benefits of self-education (Ditzion, 1947). As Ditzion (1947) explains, Wayland believed the zeitgeist of the early industrial period, had led the populace to value empty materialism over more lofty and noble ideals. Moreover, this was leading America down the path it was the Founders' intention to avoid, which was a society plagued by stark socio-economic divisions (Ditzion, 1947). Public education via schools and libraries would help to prevent social regression toward aristocracy, as well as the communist

elements it promotes[8] (Ditzion, 1947). Interestingly, Franklin Roosevelt once spoke to this point, noting:

> Libraries are directly and immediately involved in the conflict which divides our world, and for two reasons; first, because they are essential to the functioning of a democratic society; second, because the contemporary conflict touches the integrity of scholarship, the freedom of the mind, and even the survival of culture, and libraries are the great tools of scholarship, the great repositories of culture, and the great symbols of the freedom of the mind. (Ditzion, 1947, prologue)

Edward Everett was a man of vast intellectual curiosity whose life was divided among varied personal pursuits. Everett was a minister, scholar, statesman, and orator of the highest order (Ditzion, 1947; Varg, 1992). He studied at Harvard, was minister in Boston for a year, then left to engage in further studies in Germany, France, and England (Varg, 1992). Although he began his career as a minister, it is clear from his essays and correspondence that Everett was more the scholar than minister. Varg (1992) cites several primary sources which illustrate Everett's belief that religion was unlikely to have as profound an effect on man as intellectuality. "He aspired to promote cultural development in the United States and to advance a community in which men reached out for lives that extended beyond both materialistic strivings and orthodox religion with its adherence to doctrines based on arbitrary facts derived from past ages" (Varg, 1992, p. 25). It was this mindset that led Everett to push for a tax-supported public library in Boston, offering his personal collection of public documents as a foundation on which to build the library's collection (Ditzion, 1947).

The third figure central to the founding of Boston Public, according to scholars (e.g., Bostwick, 1968; Ditzion, 1947; Thomson, 1952) was George Ticknor, "who had absorbed much

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[8] i.e., the revolutionary idea of abolishing all private wealth

of his enthusiasm for great book collections in the company of…Everett at Göttingen [University in Germany]" (Ditzion, 1947, p. 14). He was a man of distinguished intellectual breeding, who in his formative years began a life-long correspondence with Thomas Jefferson (Ditzion, 1947). By way of his intellectual pursuits, Ticknor, like Everett, had traveled throughout Europe, taking in the sights and sounds of that refined, intellectual environment (Ditzion, 1947). As Ditzion notes:

> A few of the Jefferson-Ticknor letters mirrored the ideals these two shared. One of these from the young scholar in Germany glorified in the freedom of writing and teaching which prevailed in German learning…If truth was to be attained by freedom of inquiry, then Germany was bound to find the truth. Jefferson's remarks on the resistance of Harvard's befrocked teachers to all advances in university teaching must have fallen on very willing ears: "The spirit of that order is to fear and oppose all change, stigmatizing it under the name of innovation, and not considering that all improvement is innovation, and that without innovation we should still have been inhabitants of the forest, brutes among brutes." (pp. 15-16)

These beliefs were integral to Ticknor's inclusive educational philosophy. Unlike many of the other intellectuals pushing the public library movement in Boston, Ticknor did not see such an organization as a resource for the professional and learned alone (Ditzion, 1947). Instead, he believed it was paramount that all men should have access to, and take advantage of, that knowledge that a public library has to offer (Ditzion, 1947).

Professional Support for the Library's Democratic Mission

As the modern public library has progressed, its democratic mission has been refined and expanded in at least four ways that show the library profession in step with American democratic culture. For example, one can see the library's modern democratic mission illustrated by several

professional mission statements that espouse the value of free and open access to information

(Byrne, 2003), as well as the federal government's statutory support of the library as civic space

and public forum (Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993b; Kretchmer, 2001). Additionally, in response

to a growing concern over information equity, the library profession has taken note and

responded to the need for ensuring outreach to wider constituencies of disadvantaged individuals

(Heanue, 2001). Lastly, the library has attempted to maintain and expand services linked to

foundational democratic values, such as the promotion of civil society and community progress

(Durrance et al., 2001).

Byrne (2003) cites three professional mission statements in particular that have helped to

form the democratic framework of today's public libraries: The ALA *Library Bill of Rights*;

UNESCO's *Public Library Manifesto*; and IFLA *Glasgow Declaration*. Taken together, these

three decrees illustrate support for traditional democratic values that extend across the globe.

ALA's *Library Bill of Rights* outlines six basic tenets[9] of a public library system that

revolve around equitable information access and a staunch opposition to censorship of any type.

"That landmark declaration viewed the library as 'an institution to educate for democratic living'

which should practice non-discriminatory selection policies, acquire materials reflecting all sides

of [intellectual] questions, and accommodate discussion on public issues" (Byrne, 2003, p. 118).

Moreover, Stielow (2001) describes it as a "…crucial document for the library's…devotion to

the First Amendment" (p. 10).

The *Public Library Manifesto* supports the same basic ideas expressed in the *Library Bill

of Rights* and goes one step further by associating those normative standards with the formation

of healthy democratic communities. As the document states:

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[9] See Appendix A for the complete document.

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and individuals are fundamental

human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to

exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive

participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well

as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

(UNESCO, 2010)

UNESCO's document also lists twelve specific missions[10] that aid the public library in spreading

democratic ideals and, further, offers normative recommendations toward building a library

system of high quality through specific administrative practices. As with the UN and ALA

documents, the Glasgow Declaration offers statements[11] of support for democratic ideals, albeit

in a manner that focuses on the concept of intellectual freedom more so than specific information

services or resources.

Statutory Support for a Democratic Mission

Many rightfully question the value of normative declarations, such as those cited above

(e.g., Baldwin, 1996; Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Doyle, 2002; Fricke et al., 2000; Ross & Caidi,

2005). These individuals point out that while some organizations do live up to their billing,

others engage in practices that are ethically questionable while simultaneously cultivating a

public image built on normative standards that are beyond reproach[12]. So, for the library, perhaps

greater confidence in democratic claims might be garnered if corroborating evidence of some

sort were offered. Fortunately, such evidence can be found in the form of statutory support for

the public library's democratic mission.

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[10] See Appendix B for the complete document.
[11] See Appendix C for the complete document.
[12] e.g., British Petroleum (BP) and the Deepwater Horizon spill, McDonalds and their questionable cattle farming practices, and The Second Mile charity's connection to the Sandusky molestation cases.

According to Hafner and Sterling-Folker (1993b), it is highly appropriate, and indeed revealing, to investigate democratic claims concerning the public library from a legal perspective. "Legal decisions and interpretations demonstrate the practical applications of ideas and theory…[and] can provide a rational and consistent explanation for how…the public library fits into the larger social and political context" (pp. 107-108). Moreover, case law establishes both the status of the public library as a civic space and public forum, as well as the information provided within that space as protected speech (Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993b; Kretchmer, 2001).

Brown et al. v. Louisiana (383 U.S. 131[1966]) sees the American Civil Rights Movement intersecting with library service to prompt the first statutory recognition of the public library as a protected public forum. In describing the facts of the case, Kretchmer (2001) notes:

> "On March 7, 1964, in Clinton, Lousianna…five African American men entered the tiny adult reading and service room of the Audubon Regional Library, which was operated on a segregated basis. Brown requested a book [and was rendered service]…[the librarian] then asked the men to leave the library…When they did not leave after they were also asked by the regional librarian and the sheriff, the men were arrested and subsequently convicted of violating the Louisiana breach of peace statue for congregating in the public library and refusing to leave when ordered to do so." (pp. 147-148).

Of course, this case would not be mentioned here if the Supreme Court had not overturned these convictions. Indeed, the court, in a 5-4 decision, proclaimed that the convictions, and the law in question, infringed upon the First and Fourteenth Amendment rights of those convicted (Hafner, 1993; Kretchmer, 2001). "*Brown v. Louisiana* affirmed the right of access to the public library in

the context of the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech, assembly, and petition" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 148).

The establishment of the public library as a public forum was reaffirmed with *Concerned Women for America, Inc.(CWA) and Jolene Cox v. Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library* (883 F2d 32 [1989]) (Kretchmer, 2001). This case concerned a religious group's unsuccessful petition to utilize the auditorium of their local public library for group meetings. "Based on the library's policy of allowing use of the auditorium only for artistic and educational purposes, the CWA's request was denied" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 151). However, the court did find that the First Amendment rights of CWA members had been breached by the library's actions. In reaching its conclusions, the court referred to the public library as an established public forum and stated that the government, as represented by the public library, had no right to limit the use of its public facilities based on the content of the speech to be shared in that area.

The establishment of the public library as a public forum for the free expression of ideas also encompasses the uninhibited receipt of such information. Indeed, Kretchmer (2001) cites two cases in particular that help to outline this connection. "In *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26, et al. v. Pico, et al.* (457 U.S. 853 [1982]) First Amendment guarantees were tested in the perennially controversial social and political atmosphere surrounding children, school libraries, book banning, and the right to receive ideas and information" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 149). Specifically, the New York Board of Education decided to ignore recommendations from a committee, comprised of parents and school staff, and ordered the removal of nine books from its libraries, based on the fact that they were "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 149). A group of students then brought suit against the school board for these actions, based on what they

perceived as an infringement of their First Amendment rights to receive information. The Supreme Court ruled in their favor, saying, in part:

> A school library, no less than any other public library, is a place dedicated to quiet, to knowledge, and to beauty…[S]tudents must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding…The school library is the principal locus of such freedom. (457 U.S. 853 [1982], as cited in Kretchmer, 2001, p. 149)

The case of *American Council of the Blind, et al. v. Daniel J. Boorsin, Librarian of Congress* (644 F. Supp. 811 [1986]), revolved around the National Library Service's program for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Specifically, the Library of Congress's production and provision of *Playboy* in Braille came under fire by a member of Congress who successfully lobbied his colleagues to reduce the Library of Congress's budget by the exact amount expended to produce the braille format of *Playboy*. "Following the passage of the amendment by Congress, [Librarian of Congress] Boorsin announced that the production and distribution of Braille editions of *Playboy* would be discontinued" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 150). However, once again, the courts decided that:

> Although individuals have no right to a government subsidy or benefit, once one is conferred, as it is here through the allocation of funds for the program, the government cannot deny it on a basis that impinges on freedom of speech….Congressional concerns about the nature of *Playboy* may be well-taken, but…this dispute is not about the value or merit of *Playboy* but about a viewpoint-based denial of a subsidy, a denial which in a less emotionally charged content Congress and the taxpayers may find less palatable. Censorship whether by Congress or by the Librarian of Congress is equally abhorrent to a

society built on the tenets of freedom of speech and expression. (644 F. Supp. 811

[1986], as cited in Kretchmer, 2001, pp. 150-151)

The last case worth note here is that of *Richard R. Kreimer v. Bureau of Police for the*

Town of Morristown, et al. (958 F.2d 1242 [1992]). The particulars of this case relate the usage

of Morristown public library facilities by a homeless man, Mr. Richard Kreimer. More

specifically, it was found that in his usage of the public library, Mr. Kreimer had often caused

disruption through various activities[13] that caused others to complain and discontinue their use of

library facilities and services. Hafner (1993) note that, like the previously cited cases, this case

relates to the connection between the public library and those rights guaranteed under the

provisions of the First Amendment. Further, this case "…explores the public library's role as a

public forum and provides guidelines that delineate the public library's relationship not only to

individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution but also to the public it serves" (Hafner, 1993, p.

173).

In expressing its decision on the Kreimer case, the Court found "…that the library's rules

were reasonable "manner" restrictions on patrons' constitutional right to receive information and

significantly advanced its interest in enabling the optimal and safest use of its facilities"

(Kretchmer, 2001, p. 153). The Court further stipulated that public libraries are *limited public*

fora where First Amendment guarantees must be balanced with reasonable restrictions that

ensure others' rights to equal use of the space. As Judge Greenberg explains in the court's

decision:

> …as a limited public forum, the Library is obligated only to permit the public to exercise
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> rights that are consistent with the nature of the Library and consistent with the

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[13] "The library contended that Kreimer often exhibited inappropriate, disruptive, and offensive behavior, such as staring at and following patrons, talking loudly to himself, and a lack of personal hygiene that resulted in an unbearably repugnant odor" (Kretchmer, 2001, p. 152).

government's intent in designating the Library as a public forum. Other acti9vities need not be tolerated…The aim of the rules…is to foster a quiet and orderly atmosphere…conducive to every patron's exercise of their constitutionally protected interest in receiving and reading written communications…The Library need not be used as a lounge or a shelter…[and] may regulate conduct protected under the First Amendment which does not actually disrupt the Library. (958 F.2d 1242 [1992], as cited in Kretchmer, 2001, p. 153)

The Library's Promotion of Civil Society

Extending from the establishment of public libraries as public goods established for the free and open access to information is the potential for libraries to promote *civil society*. Durrance et al. (2001) point out that "public libraries are unique providers of civic and government information…" (p. 49). Several examples of this exist in the form of the provision of: employment information, government information, information of relevance to immigrant and minority populations, and programs that promote civic understanding among youth (Durrance et al., 2001). Durrance et al. go onto explain, many libraries organize and provide community information (CI), especially employment information, either through in-house services or through providing access to external databases of such information. There are also numerous examples of libraries organizing government information for greater access by their users. Heanue (2001) specifically cites the public libraries important role in sustaining public awareness of federal policy through their support of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), which aids in the dissemination of information produced by the Government

Publications Office (GPO)[14]. "Today, 1,330 depository libraries located in most congressional districts make available a broad range of government publications in print and electronic formats to the American public and ensure that the information is preserved for the use by future generations" (Heanue, 2001, p. 122).

Durrance et al. mention several other ways in which libraries serve the practical democratic interests of communities through information provision. For example, employment information is an often-sought resource by library users (Durrance et al., 2001). Moreover, expertise of librarians in the organization and provision of such information can help users to more effectively take advantage of such information by providing organized CI pages within the library website, providing a one-stop solution to finding such information (Durrance et al., 2001). Durrance et al. also note that libraries often provide services that target the needs of immigrant and cultural minority populations.

However, even with the strong statutory support cited by Kretchmer (2001), Kranich (2001b) cites several troubling legal decisions that work against traditional library values, and place the public library on unstable legal footing with regard to the provision of government information. In particular, she notes privacy and access concerns surrounding the increasingly prevalent digital information to which libraries provide access. While the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993 and the Electronic Freedom of Information Act of 1996 provided for seemingly unprecedented access to government information, subsequent moves by Congress reclassified many public documents as secret or otherwise exempt from these laws (Kranich, 2001b). In addition, Kranich (2001b) notes the potentially damaging nature of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 and the Collections of Information Antipiracy

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[14] The subject of the public library's provision of government documents is a complex subject in and of itself that is merely glanced upon here. Deeper discussion on these matters will be reserved for a later time.

Act of 1999 with regard to the public libraries ability to provide equitable information access via the traditional *fair use*[15] conduit.

A Problem of purpose

Along with these statutory concerns, there are also those who question the library's practical value to democracy, based on a growing *problem of purpose*. Arko-cobbah (2006) affirms that public libraries were clearly established in the name of self-education and democracy. However, he cautions: "Today, this [mission] appears to have been devalued in favor of popularizing libraries simply to attract more users. This shift has led to more emphasis being placed on entertainment and marketing at the expense of what some believe to be the true purpose of the public library system" (Arko-cobbah, 2006, p. 349). Hafner (1993) confirms such a shift in purpose, and attributes it to "[t]he desire to meet the demands of the people [with] an emphasis on entertainment and popular culture" (p. 23). Moreover, he notes that this shift has resulted in an organization for which production alone appears the only purpose[16].

In exploring the democratic implications of this shift further, Arko-cobbah (2006) claims it has coincided with the loss of civic space, which provides a vital forum for communities to engage in meaningful political discourse. Buschman (2003) and McCabe (2001a, 2001b) agree, citing an associated shift in public values away from the community and toward the individual. And while this shift is not the central focus of this dissertation, it is perhaps appropriate to outline the theories that have been presented with regard to this phenomenon.

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[15] *Fair use* refers to those circumstances, stipulated by copyright laws, in which copyright infringement is not of concern. Traditionally, the reproduction of portions, and even full copies, of copyrighted materials might fall under fair use protections if such use was deemed for educational purposes only.

[16] It seems worth noting that a library cannot do anything for the community if it is closed. Moreover, if it takes a more mainstream, entertainment-centered approach to garner public funding, then such steps would seem justified. Nevertheless, this shift and its effect on the democratic nature of these agencies are worth note.

Buschman (2003), McCabe (2001a, 2001b), and D'Angelo (2006) agree that it is not just

a shift in the service models of libraries, but a shift in society as a whole that has resulted in the

loss of civic space. Specifically, they note a complex shift in American culture that sees

communal interests give way to individual interests. Those ideas championed during the

Enlightenment, and corrupted in order to quell even moderate individualism during the early 20th

century, lead to the birth of a counter-culture rebellion in the 1960s that promoted radial

individualism. As McCabe (2001a) explains: "Although counterculture's utopian world of

complete individual freedom did not materialize, the counterculture succeeded to a great extent

in challenging social authorities and purposes as enemies of individual freedom" (p. 62).

Moreover, this movement has resulted in changes on both the left and right side of partisan

politics. While the Left endorses an "expressive" individualism, the Right endorses a "utilitarian"

form of this same individualism—with the community-centered thinking of yesteryear taking a

backseat to both (McCabe, 2001a). As Buschman (2003) concludes: "In the end, customer-

driven librarianship contributes to the changeover from 'a democracy of citizens [to] a

democracy of consumers' because it is only those who can 'vote' with money or tax support who

are meaningfully addressed by libraries" (p. 122).

From outside of the field of librarianship, Oldenburg (1989) identifies another side to the

same phenomenon. What he dubs the *problem of place* revolves around the industrialization and

suburbanization of America, which has led to increasing isolation in communities. Describing

the problem, Oldenburg (1989) notes:

The typical suburban home is easy to leave behind as its occupants move to another.

What people cherish most in them can be taken along in the move. There are no sad

farewells at the local taverns or the corner store because there are no local taverns or

corner stores….Meanwhile, new generations are encouraged to shun a community life in favor of a highly privatized one and to set personal aggrandizement above the public good. (pp. 8-9)

Oldenburg (1989) goes on further to describe the character and benefits of third places. These places are set apart from the home and the workplace, thus they are third places. They are places where people can unwind and relax in the company of other community members. Further, these places are not about the commercialization of anything, but rather about the social bonds that develop through community interaction.

Moving the Library's Democratic Mission Forward

Overall, there are several facts that support claims of the public libraries service to democracy. However, the practical implications of these facts remain open to interpretation. Yes, the historical narrative of the public library does provide ample evidence of a democratic tradition within the profession. Further, statutory and professional support does provide a foundation for the continuance of such a mission. However, serious questions linger.

What happens when the public decides they do not need libraries to support their democratic interests—or if politicians decide the public library is not worth the budget lines required to maintain service? The *problem of purpose*, along with library closures in the wake of economic downturn, show that both of these scenarios are possible. Further, professional or statutory support, as they have thus far been exemplified, will not likely provide any protections or solutions for the shift toward more economic-based service models.

In examining the democratic nature of public libraries one invariably must ask: What's next? In answering, this dissertation asserts that more empirical study is needed to fully understand the place of public libraries within the communities they serve. Research is needed

into the real, rather than simply the normative or potential, capacity for public libraries to serve

or support democracy. In looking for some new direction, it is best to reexamine the concept of

democracy itself.

Participation as the Core of Democracy

As democracy has evolved over its long history, one aspect has remained constant and is

inseparable from democratic practice. That aspect is citizen participation. While decision rules,

administrative structures, and even those rules governing who can participate have changed

across democratic generations, the necessity of participation has remained constant. Moreover,

the importance of robust civic and political participation is illustrated in how such participation

affects the quality of the regime.

Putnam et al. (1994), in their seminal study of civic life and government in modern Italy,

show that it is the *civicness* of communities that most directly affects the performance of its

government. Moreover, this civicness is defined by: (a) civic engagement; (b) political equality;

(c) solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and (d) social structures of cooperation. Putnam et al. define

civic engagement simply as active participation in public affairs. With regard to *political*

equality, Putnam et al. note: "Citizenship in the civic community entails equal rights and

obligations for all. Such a community is bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and

cooperation, not by vertical relations of authority and dependency" (p. 88). *Solidarity, trust, and*

tolerance relates to the manner in which community members interact. As Putnam et al. contend,

in the civic community individuals treat each other with respect, even when they disagree on

important social issues. "Even seemingly 'self-interested' transactions take on a different

character when they are embedded in social networks that foster mutual trust…[f]abrics of trust

enable the civic community more easily to surmount what economists call 'opportunism,' in

which shared interests are unrealized because each individual, acting in wary isolation, has an incentive to defect from collective action" (Putnam et al., 1994, p. 89). Lastly, *social structures of cooperation* are the buttressing force that sustains the civic community's norms and values (Putnam et al., 1994). Putnam et al. further explain:

> Civic associations contribute to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government, it is argued, both because of their 'internal' effects on individual members and because of their 'external' effects on the wider polity. Internally, associations instill in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness…Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors…Externally…a dense network of secondary associations both embodies and contributes to effective social collaboration. (pp. 89-90)

Defining Civic Engagement

Even with a the strong case made by Putnam et al. regarding the importance of *social capital*, or those community norms of mutual respect, trust, and reciprocity that influence community decision making, it makes sense here to focus instead on *civic engagement* for the simple reason that it is the most objectively discernible facet of that research. That is to say, civic engagement provides a phenomenon that is easily and reliably measured. This is important in the case of this discussion as this dissertation seeks to move past the normative writings of the past.

Civic engagement has been defined several ways within the literature of political science—perhaps even to its detriment. While many authors offer specific definitions of "civic engagement," Berger (2011) posits that the term has become nearly meaningless due wide variations in these definitions. "Scholars use civic engagement to describe activities ranging from bowling in leagues to watching political television shows, writing checks to political

advocacy groups, and participating in political rallies and marches. For many journalists, public officials, and political activists, civic engagement can mean everything from charitable giving to associational membership, political participation, artistic expression, or community service" (Berger, 2011, p. 2). Of course, even if these statements ring true, this does not pose an insurmountable difficulty. One need only define what they mean by "civic engagement" in order to study and discuss it meaningfully.

Hays (2007) defines civic engagement as "participation in voluntary, community-based organizations and associations" (p. 401). McCoy and Scully (2002) state that civic engagement simply involves people addressing public issues. Committing to a more nuanced definition, Barasko (2005) defines the term as: meaningful connections among citizens and citizens, issues, and institutions and the political system...it implies voice and agency, a feeling of power and effectiveness, with real opportunities to have a say...active participation, with real opportunities to make a difference" (p. 316). In prescribing the practical borders of these conceptual definitions, Putnam et al. note that civic engagement, or participation, involves several types of political and non-political/civic activities that include: voting, attending a public meeting on town or school affairs, attending a political rally or speech, serving on the committee of some local organization, or working for a political party. Verba et al. (1995) cite similar activities in connection with what they term "civic voluntarism," which equates to voluntary political participation. They further explain that "political participation is activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action" (p. 9).

For this dissertation civic engagement is used in its most general sense, and signifies an active participation in matters of a civic or political nature. This definition encompasses those activities outlined by Hays (2007), Putnam et al., as well as Verba et al. In this way, civic

engagement is an umbrella term that should not be used to signify any one activity. Instead, this term encompasses a host of activities that relate to what Plato and Aristotle termed an individual's *civic virtue*, or involvement in those activities relating to the practice of communal organization or governance.

The Importance of Civic Engagement

The idea of civic virtue is not of central importance to answering the research question currently at hand. However, exploring this concept does provide important context with regard to the nature of civic engagement, as well as its importance to political/governmental systems. At its most basic, the concept of civic virtue arises from traditional republicanism, and more specifically Aristotle's critique of Greek forms of democracy (Dahl, 1989). Expounding on this idea, Dahl (1989) notes:

> To begin with, republicanism adopted the view, common in Greek political thought (whether democratic or antidemocratic) that man is by nature a social and political animal; to fulfill their potentialities, human beings must live together in a political association; a good man must also be a good citizen; a good polity is an association constituted by good citizens; a good citizen possesses the quality of civic virtue; virtue is the predisposition to seek the good of all in public matters; a good polity, therefore, is one that not only reflects but also promotes the virtue of its citizens" (pp. 24-25).

Simply put, the virtuous citizen has a duty to serve within the community. This service can take many forms, but at its heart is set toward perpetuating civil society—a functioning community made up of many individuals working toward what Rousseau termed *the common good*[17].

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[17] i.e., that which is in the best interest of all of society

Putnam et al. identify several characteristics of the civic-mindedness of communities—or what might be described as the defining characteristics of civic virtue. "Citizenship in a civic community is marked, first of all, by active participation in public affairs" (Putnam et al., 1994, p. 87). In these communities citizens recognize both the equal rights, as well as the equal obligations, of their fellow citizen. Along these same lines, virtuous citizens are helpful, respectful, and trusting of one another. In the civic community self-interest is tempered by community interest. Moreover, these areas show higher levels of public involvement in local associations, they follow political issues through media more closely, and are engaged in politics out of programmatic conviction. "By contrast, in less civic areas, voters are brought to the polls by hierarchical patron-client networks...there is an absence of civic associations and a paucity of local media" (Putnam et al., 1994, p. 97).

The duty of the citizen is necessitated by the very nature of what Aristotle called polity[18], and what is now most often referred to as democracy. That is to say, popular rule necessitates some sort of participation from the individuals living within that system. Verba et al. affirm: "Citizen participation is at the heart of democracy" (p. 1). "A strong civic life and a flourishing democracy presume the active involvement of many people across society" (McCoy & Scully, 2002, p. 117). Civic engagement helps to define the representativeness of government and demonstrate public support for government actions (Wagle, 2006). Conversely, low levels of political participation exacerbate inequality within societies (Wagle, 2006). Verba et al. add: "More than in most democracies, voluntary activity in America shapes the allocation of

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[18] In *Politics* Aristotle claims that democracy is the corrupt version of what he terms *polity*, which is rule by the many. According to Aristotle, democracy occurs when polity, rule by the many in favor of achieving what is the best interest for all, devolves into rule by the many in the interest of the poor, uneducated masses, who by their very nature are not well-suited to making such decisions.

economic, social, and cultural benefits and contributes to the achievement of collective

purposes" (p. 7).

Predictors of Civic Engagement

While the importance of civic engagement is implicit within the context of popular

governance, questions still linger as to why some individuals are more involved than others.

However, before one approaches the question of why differences exist, it is important to

understand the nature of those differences. That is to say, it is important to first understand who

participates and who does not.

Issues of race and gender have been at the center of important changes to the American

political landscape over the past century (Brody, 1978; Clemens, 1999; Verba et al., 1995). Most

significantly, women's suffrage, as well as the end of slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow have

all had a profound effect on who can participate in governance, with further implications

attached to the political power such rights garner. In discussing the significant impact of the

women's suffrage movement on American politics, Clemens (1999) notes that the push for equal

voting rights coincided with a political shift that witnessed party politics give way to the power

of interest groups. Moreover, this confluence of events led to women securing and exerting

considerable political power through such groups in the relatively short span of 30 years (roughly

1890 to 1920). In examining the contemporary state of this issue, Verba et al. note only the

smallest of gaps in participation between men and women today, which underscores the potential

influence of women as a participatory block.

"There are racial disparities across every form of political activity in both the electoral

and governmental arenas" (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993, p. 43). A detailed exploration of these

differences shows that Anglo-Whites are roughly 16% more politically active than African

Americans and 83% more active than Latinos (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993; Verba et al., 1995).

More specifically, a higher percentage of Anglo-Whites indicate involvement with voting, contributing to campaigns, having contact with officials, and being affiliated with political groups, while a higher percentage of African Americans indicate involvement with campaign work and informal community activities (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993; Verba et al., 1995).

Differences in participation can also be seen across the spectrum of income and education. "Wealthy Americans are more likely than poor Americans to take part in political activities. Rates of turnout among the most affluent citizens are nearly 35 percentage points higher than the rates of turnout among the most needy…" (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993, p. 43). Wealthier individuals are almost three times as likely to attempt to influence how others vote (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993). Higher income individuals are also much more likely to sign a petition, attend a public meeting, or write a letter to Congress (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993). "Finally, better educated Americans are more prone than the lesser educated to participate in politics" (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993, p. 44). Those with a college degree are 30% more likely to vote, are twice as likely to attempt to influence others' political beliefs, and are four times as likely to attend a public meeting or sign a petition (Rosenstone & Hanson, 1993). "More generally, those whose education stopped before they completed high school tend to be underrepresented in the actual electorate; those who went on to college tend to be overrepresented; and those who completed high school but did not go on to college comprise about the same proportions of potential and actual electorates" (Brody, 1978, p. 295).

Explaining Variations in Participation

Verba et al. note the prominence of the SES model as a powerful predictor of political and non-political participation. This model is fashioned around socioeconomic indicators, such

as education and income, which interact with other indicators such as age, sex, race, marital status, employment status, occupation to form the foundations of an individual's socioeconomic *class* (Brody, 1978).

Indeed, many studies have been carried out that confirm the SES model's status as a powerful predictor of participation. Caputo (1997, 2010) cites several studies (e.g., Lammers, 1991; Lazerwitz, 1962; Statham & Rhoton, 1986; Stephan, 1991; Uslaner, 2002) that point to education and income as predictors of an individual's propensity to volunteer within their community. As Lammers (1991) notes, "…in predicting volunteer duration, education change while a volunteer was found to be significant…[and] also played a role in distinguishing between dropout and committed volunteers" (p. 139). Additionally, race, as a correlate of education and income, has also been identified by several studies as a significant predictor. Caputo (1997, 2010) posits that both race and education are significant contributing factors in one's propensity to engage in volunteer activity. Specifically, higher education increases *activism*[19], while being White is associated with lower levels of activism (Caputo, 1997, 2010). Brody (1978) adds: "Under the rigors of multivariate analysis...education appears to be related to rates of participation across the full range of its variation" (p. 295).

However, while the SES model exhibits powerful predictive power, it is weak in theoretical, or explanatory, power (Verba et al., 1995). In the words of Verba et al.: "It fails to provide a coherent rationale for the connection between the explanatory socioeconomic variables and participation…there is no clearly specified mechanism linking social statuses to activity" (p. 281). Moreover, even the SES model's predictive power has been questioned at times. For example, Brody (1978) notes that while income and occupation relate to participation in a similar

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[19] Activism is a particular brand of political and non-political participation that is specifically aimed at changing some social or political realty. This should be viewed separately from what might be called typical participation, which is directed by society's status quo, rather than against it.

way to education, when considered independent of education, these indicators have very little explanatory power. Even education itself is called into question as a reliable predictor in certain situations, especially at the aggregate level of analysis. In examining several changes that have occurred among the American electorate since 1820, Campbell (1972) notes: "There is probably no single variable in the survey repertoire that generates as substantial correlations in such a variety of directions in political behavior material as level of formal education" (p. 324).

The Puzzle of Participation

Brody (1978) notes that up until 1978, every study of education and political participation showed a positive correlation. However, he cautions of a peculiarity that exists with the relationship at the aggregate level—that relationship simply does not exist. While education seems to be a powerful predictor of an individual's likelihood to vote, overall trends at the aggregate, or society, level do not follow suit. Brody (1978) reasons, if educational attainment is positively linked to political participation, and in particular voting, then one would expect overall participation levels to rise in tandem with the overall educational levels of society. However, this has not been the case. He points out that even as education levels among Americans sharply rose during the 1960s and 1970s, participation was sharply decreasing.

Investigating Brody's "puzzle of participation" over a decade later, Miller (1992) noted that macro-level declines in participation that continued into the 1980s were not easily explained with existing models. In attempting to resolve this issue, Miller (1992) examines several differences that exist between generations of voters, particularly "Pre-New Deal," "New Deal," and "Post-New Deal" generations. What Miller (1992) finds is that while some of the discrepancy between voter turnout and education might be explainable as a product of intergenerational variation in party identification and social connectedness, the majority of

Brody's puzzle is not yet solved. Moreover, other social factors that Miller (1992) examines, such as declining political efficacy, citizen duty, and political interest, are also lacking in predictive power.

Rational Choice Theory

Several scholars offer up the *rational choice* model of participation as an alternative to the SES model. Laying the groundwork for this model, Becker (1962) notes that traditional economic theory assumes rational behavior of actors within economic systems. Further, this *rationality* is best described as behaviors geared toward maximization of utility or benefit to those engaged in said behaviors. Building on the work of Arrow (1951) and Schumpeter (1950), Downs (1957b) reasons:

> ...any attempt to construct a theory of government action without discussing the motives of those who run the government must be regarded as inconsistent with the main body of economic analysis. Every such attempt fails to face the fact that governments are concrete institutions run by men, because it deals with them on a purely normative level. As a result, these attempts can never lead to an integration of government with other decision-makers in a general equilibrium theory.

In speaking to this problem further, Downs (1957b) sets forth five axioms on which his economic theory of political action rests:

1. Each political party is a team of men who seek office solely in order to enjoy the income, prestige, and power that go with running the governing apparatus.

2. The winning party (or coalition) has complete control over the government's actions until the next election. There are no votes of confidence between elections either by a legislature or by the electorate, so the governing party cannot be ousted before the

next election. Nor are any of its orders resisted or sabotaged by an intransigent bureaucracy.

3. Government's economic powers are un-limited. It can nationalize everything, hand everything over to private interests, or strike any balance between these extremes.

4. The only limit on government's powers is that the incumbent party cannot in any way restrict the political freedom of opposition parties or of individual citizens, unless they seek to overthrow it by force.

5. Every agent in the model—whether an individual, a party or a private coalition— behaves rationally at all times; that is, it proceeds toward its goals with a minimal use of scarce resources and undertakes only those actions for which marginal return exceeds marginal cost.

These axioms form the foundation for a *rational choice* or *rational actor* theory of political participation, which, boiled down to its most basic parts, states that individuals participate in politics only when such participation is associated with a benefit that suits said individuals' best interests.

In an attempt to provide evidence for this theory, several studies have searched for a connection between self-interest and participation. Involvement with federal aid programs and, in particular, the self-interested pursuit of those civic and political ends that support such aid, has been offered up as a determining factor of civic engagement. Campbell (2002) confirms: "The Social Security-based participation of low-income seniors is a rare instance in which self-interest is highly influential" (p. 571). Moreover, both high and low-income seniors are civically mobilized when issues of an economic nature are at question (Campbell, 2002; 2003). As Campbell (2002) concludes: "Groups that see a visible effect of government policy on their well-

being…have a great stake in government activity and participate at higher rates than would otherwise be expected" (p. 572). Additionally, Rotolo et al. (2010) have shown how home ownership has a positive effect on political participation.

Of course, there have been many who question the veracity of this model—the first of which was Downs (1957b) himself. Even while carrying out his thought experiment on the potential for economic theory to help explain political participation, he notes several major deficiencies of such a model. In particular, he notes that if one follows the tenants of economic theory through to their final conclusion, one is faced with the fact that what seems irrational behavior within normative political models is, in fact, a rational response to a world of imperfect information. That is to say, one must have perfect information to make the "right" political decision, based on what is in their best interest. Further, perfect information is not likely possible in any situation. Therefore, as Downs (1957b) states: "Apathy among citizens toward elections, ignorance of the issues, the tendency of parties in a two-party system to resemble each other, and the anti-consumer bias of government action can all be explained logically as efficient reactions to imperfect information in a large democracy" (p. 149). Downs (1957b) concludes that "a truly useful theory of government action in a democracy—or in any other type of society—must be both economic and political in nature" (p. 150).

The idea that a rational choice model predicts less turnout than is actually witnessed has been termed by some (e.g., Bäck et al., 2011; Olson, 1965; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Whiteley, 1995) a "paradox of participation." Following up on the work of Downs (1957a, 1957b), Riker and Ordeshook (1968) further developed a *calculus of voting* in which *R* is the reward of the act of voting; *B* is the benefit achieved from an actor's preferred candidate winning an election; *P* is

the probability that the actor's singular vote will be the deciding factor in the election; and *C* is the personal cost to the actor to vote. Further, this calculus of voting equates to the formula:

$$R = (BP) - C$$

Riker and Ordeshook (1968) further explain that if *R*>0, it is reasonable to vote, and if *R*≤0, voting is not a reasonable activity. As Downs (1957a) points out, in all foreseeable cases *P* is going to amount effectively to zero while *C* will always fall above zero. This means there is likely to never be a situation in which voting is a rational behavior.

Bäck et al. (2011) note: "The calculus of voting has on several occasions been generalized to other forms of collective action, such as group membership (Moe 1980), rebellions (Muller & Opp 1986), party activity (Whiteley 1995) or simply 'political participation' in general (Nagel 1987)" (p. 76). Bäck et al. go on further to state:

> A number of efforts have been made to solve that paradox [of participation]. As pointed out by Finkel and Muller (1998, 39), however, the empirical literature has for the most part focused on two basic types of potential solutions. The first is an extension of Olson's (1965) own 'solution' – that is, specifying the private payoffs or *selective incentives* that accrue to the participants only and which therefore may help individuals to overcome the cost of participation even if the collective incentives are insufficient. The second involves specifying a model where the combined *PB* term, called '*collective incentives*', might yield a nonzero expected utility of participation.

In approaching the first solution proposed, that of selective incentives, Bäck et al. state that many have employed the *D* term proposed by Riker and Ordeshook (1968). As Riker and Ordeshook (1968) note, the *D* term is a product of looking at the act of voting as a self-contained act and amounts to a type of benefit derived from an act for which the magnitude is independent

of the act itself. To put it more simply, *D* refers to some sort of psychological benefit, or *psychic gratification* as termed by Bäck et al., such as the satisfaction of: doing one's civic duty, expressing one's allegiance to democracy, the satisfaction of expressing one's partisan preference, so forth and so on (Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). So the new formula of participation becomes:

$$R = (BP) - C + D$$

Taking this new formula into account, so long as *D* remains positive, the act of political participation remains a rational choice.

Turning to the second solution mentioned by Bäck et al., that of collective incentives, one can see that the solution is built upon political actors' subjective estimate of the true value of *P*, or the probability that their singular action may prove the deciding factor in a political outcome. That is, a political actor will believe that *P* is in fact much larger than it actually is. Now, one might ask, why would any person believe that their one vote counts? To this, Bäck et al. point to the *collective interest* model of Finkel and Muller (1998), "according to which 'individuals will participate in protest activities to the extent that (1) they have high levels of discontent with the current provision of public goods by the government or regime, (2) they believe that collective efforts can be successful in providing desired public goods; and (3) they believe that their own participation will enhance the likelihood of the collective effort's success'" (p. 79).

While the two most popular solutions to the paradox of participation are indeed theoretically powerful, the very fact that they are needed brings to light obstacles that hamper predictive modeling (Verba et al., 1995). "It is often the case that individuals fail to understand what is in their best interest or act out of self-interested concerns, and the question of whether self-interest motivates political action is still open to debate" (Ozymy, 2012, p. 104). Further,

one can see this in the fact that many lower-income Americans do not participate, when, objectively speaking, it is clearly in their interests to do so (Ozymy, 2012).

<div align="center">Civic Voluntarism Model</div>

In expanding on both the SES and Rational Choice models, while also answering to the shortcomings of each, Verba et al. offer their Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) as a model of participation that is strong in both theoretical and predictive power. In short, this model posits that civic voluntarism[20] among individuals is the product of three key factors: the *resources* to which that individual has access, the level of political *engagement* or interest expressed by the individual, and the amount of contact with active *recruitment* networks. Boiling it down to its simplest terms, participation is the product of an individual's ability to participate, their desire to participate, as well as their having been asked to participate (Verba et al., 1995).

Resources

Resources are the most critical component of the CVM and refer to any personal assets that are required for an individual to participate effectively in political activities (Verba et al., 1995). Resources can mean either: time, money, or civic skills, with money and time as "the resources expended most directly in political activity" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 289). Moreover, by looking at who has money and time, one is able to better understand the interaction of several demographic and socioeconomic characteristics that have been linked to participation in past studies (Verba et al., 1995). Measuring money as family income, Verba et al. find that, as one might expect, income rises steeply with individuals' level of educational attainment. However, when considering the amount of free time an individual might have, there is almost no difference seen across varying education and income levels.

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[20] Civic voluntarism is defined as voluntary participation in activities geared toward some political or non-political outcome.

Involvement with formal organizations or institutions, and specifically the opportunities such entities provide for individuals to accrue and utilize *civic skills*, is another important aspect of the resources element of the CVM. "Civic skills are the communication and organizational abilities that allow citizens to use time and money effectively in political life. [Further,] those who possess civic skills should find political activity less daunting and costly and, therefore, should be more likely to take part" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 304). So where are such skills to be found? Verba et al. (1995) affirm that it is indeed within the formal organizational setting that most individuals acquire such skills. In fact, acquisition of such skills begins at a young age at home, then throughout any formal educational matriculation (Verba et al., 1995). Of course, this type of institutional influence can also occur outside the home and school. Churches and the workplace have also been connected to the attainment of such skills.

With regard to acquiring civic skills in the workplace, Verba et al. note that the nature of one's occupation greatly affects the potential for skill acquisition. "Teachers or lawyers are more likely to have opportunities to enhance civic skills—to organize meetings, make presentations, and the like—than are fast-food workers or meat cutters" (p. 315). Moreover, occupational stratification is clearly related to those socioeconomic components of social class, such as education and income. "In this way, resources for participation accumulate: schooling itself produces civic skills; in addition, with increasing educational attainment come opportunities for jobs that not only are more financially rewarding but also provide more chances to practice civic skills" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 315).

"Because they distribute opportunities for the exercise of civic skills relatively democratically, religious institutions appear to have a powerful potential for enhancing the political resources available to citizens who would, otherwise, be resource poor" (Verba et al.,

1995, p. 320). Additionally, evidence shows the benefit of church attendance on civic skills exists independent of any skills acquired in the workplace setting. Cavendish (2000), Brown and Brown (2003), and Brown (2006) all confirm an important connection between organizations (especially churches), civic engagement, and skills. However, they also note that these organizations are not all alike when it comes to providing such benefits. For example, Cavendish (2000) notes that the administrative structure of the church has a tremendous effect on the availability of opportunities for engagement. Those churches that have more hierarchical administrative structures tend to be less involved in activism (Cavendish, 2000). Verba et al. agree with this claim, noting that Protestant denominations allow greater lay participation in church affairs—a fact backed by their regression models' findings, which show a stark contrast between civic skill attainment of Catholics and Protestants. However, it should be noted that church members in both Catholic and Protestant churches, on average, showed higher levels of exercising civic skills than non-members (Verba et al., 1995). Further, this trend can be seen across all three of the major race categories[21].

Engagement

Engagement refers to an individual's interest in matters of a political nature, as well as a feeling of efficacy, real or potential, with regard to exercising that interest toward some achievable political goal. "Both resources and political engagement would seem to be required for most forms of political participation" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 343). Moreover, one's level of engagement is closely tied to the availability of politically-relevant resources. Education and income[22] are highly correlated to an individual's level of engagement, as are a person's general interest in politics, their access to information about politics, and partisan identification (Verba et

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[21] i.e., Anglo-Whites, African Americans, and Latinos
[22] It is also important to note that education and income are highly correlated with each other as well.

al., 1995). Interestingly, resources are not a determinant factor with voting. Instead, voting is tied to engagement, income, and affiliation with organizations such as churches (Verba et al., 1995).

Importantly, Verba et al. note: "The literature on participation contains numerous measures of political engagement, many of them overlapping in meaning. We concentrate on four that, while all dimensions of political engagement, seem conceptually distinct: political interest, political efficacy, political information, and partisanship" (p. 345). *Political interest* relates to those individuals who are interested in politics as it pertains to elections and policy issues. *Political efficacy* is the degree to which individuals feel they have influence over the decisions of government. *Political information* is tied to the amount of knowledge an individual can demonstrate in areas of current political events, an understanding of the governmental systems in place, and the practical administrative realities of government. *Partisanship* refers to the strength of an individual's preference for a particular political party. Verba et al. further state: "As we might expect, political interest, efficacy, and information are all positively related to each other. Partisanship is somewhat separate, significantly related to political interest but not to efficacy or information" (p. 348).

In examining what type of person is likely to be politically engaged, Verba et al. find that education and income relate to three of the four variables attached to engagement. As education or income increases, so too does political interest, efficacy, and information. With regard to race, Verba et al. state: "In general, Anglo-Whites score the highest, African Americans next, and Latinos lowest across the various measures. The one difference is that African-Americans are somewhat stronger in partisanship" (p. 350). Lastly, when added to their regression model, *engagement* is statistically significant and the original variables associated with resources remain significant as well. "The fact that the importance of resources holds up so well once the

engagement measures are included suggest that none of the aspects of engagement is an omitted variable that explains both resources and political activity" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 353).

Recruitment

    Recruitment refers to a person's contact with, access to, or active connection with recruitment networks—networks of individuals that solicit social/civic/political involvement from others. In their study of recruitment, Verba et al. asked respondents to indicate how often they had been asked, while at work, in church, or at a meeting of a non-political organization, to be politically active[23]. Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they were exposed to political messages at work, church, or non-political organizational meetings.

    Findings indicate that exposure to political messages occurred most often during informal political discussions at non-political organizational meetings; being asked to take political actions most often occurred at church. On-the-job recruitment occurred 43% less often, with non-political organizational recruiting occurring 73% less than church-related recruitment. Verba et al. admit that these findings "are subject to misinterpretation" (p. 374). In particular, these data may indicate relatively little recruitment associated with organizational involvement. However, as Verba et al. note:

> …organizations in America can be arrayed along a continuum in terms of the extent to which they use political or non-political means of serving members' needs. In order to make sense of this complexity, we have consistently distinguished organizational affiliations on the basis of whether respondents indicate that the organizations take stands in politics. [These data] present information about organizations that do not take political stands. (p. 374)

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[23] i.e., vote or participate in some other actions, such as writing a letter to congress, signing a petition, etc.

Further, when comparing these figures to data concerning recruitment within political organizations, Verba et al. clarify that: "While [nine] percent of those whose most important organization does not take stands in politics indicated having been asked to get involved politically, fully two-thirds of those whose most important organization does take stands in politics did so" (p. 374).

Brown and Brown (2003) find that those individuals exposed to church-based political messages were over 10% more likely to vote, and 44% more likely to be involved in nonvoting political activities. Brown (2006) confirms these findings and adds that frequent church attendance increases the chances of a parishioner being exposed to political discussions and recruitment opportunities. Brown (2006) further suggests that this phenomenon is linked to the social capital resources of trust, mutual obligation, and group identity. The more these resources exist within an environment, the higher chances are of civic engagement and participation.

Klofstad (2007) confirms the importance of recruitment, noting: "A number of lines of research in the social sciences have examined the influence that social context has on political behavior. With specific regard to peers, the literature suggests that informal conversations about politics encourage individuals to participate in civic activities" (p. 181). Furthermore, Klofstad (2007) is able to confirm this proposition, surmising: "Talk about politics and current events among peers correlates with information resource transfers among peers, increased psychological engagement with politics and current events due to conversations with peers, and instances of peers recruiting each other to participate" (p. 185). Further multivariate analysis partially confirms these findings and shows that increasing political talk leads to increases in civic participation (Klofstad, 2007). However, Klofstad (2007) specifies that political and civic

conversations likely find their impact in regard to providing opportunities for political/civic recruitment.

With respect to the type of person that is recruited, the findings of Verba et al. indicate that variations exist across typical socioeconomic divisions. "Those who are advantaged in terms of income and, especially, education are more likely to be asked by institutions to take part in politics" (p. 376). Anglo-Whites are more likely to be recruited on-the-job or within non-political organizations, followed by African-Americans and Latinos. African-Americans slightly edge Anglo-Whites with regard to church-based recruitment (Verba et al., 1995).

When added to the regression model, Verba et al. find that institutional recruitment is indeed a significant predictor of political activity among respondents. In fact, "it is one of the strongest predictors—roughly as potent as education and civic skills" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 389). Additionally, both resources and political engagement remain significant predictors of political activity as well. Verba et al. conclude:

> The results highlight the multiple effects of non-political institutions on political activity. These institutions of civil society provide civic training as well as direct requests for activity. The non-political institutions of civil society have long been the heart of theories of democracy. These [findings] give an empirical grounding of unprecedented strength to their effects on democratic citizenship. (p. 390)

Implications of the Civic Voluntarism Model

In offering concluding thoughts to their study, Verba et al. note: "There is no single path to political participation. The factors associated with political activity—resources, political engagement, and institutionally based political mobilization—derive from economic position in the labor force, from involvement with voluntary association and religious institutions, and from

families and schools" (p. 459). However, while there may be no standard script, there are some safe bets with regard to who is likely to participate. Those born into socioeconomic advantage, are more likely to gain access to the educational opportunities that lead to higher prestige jobs, which provide for both the economic and skill-based resources needed to effectively participate in political processes. Moreover, Verba et al. stress the importance of education to this equation, noting: "Those with high levels of education are in a position to stockpile additional resources beyond those acquired in school" (p. 460). Most often this means the acquisition of civic skills within the ranks of higher prestige jobs.

Even as paths to participation seem predetermined and well-defined by socioeconomic status, Verba et al. offer some hope, noting that alternative paths do exist. For example, they note that both high and low income individuals receive benefits from a politically conscious home life. That is to say, those families that discuss politics, or feature politically active parents who are overt about such activity, are more likely to produce children who are also politically active. In addition, deep roots within a community as well association with organizational conduits for civic skills, such as churches, can effectively promote political activity among individuals from all walks of life. However, in closing Verba et al. do offer the cautionary statement that:

> …so long as inequalities in education and income persist—and income inequality in America has become more pronounced of late—so long as jobs continue to distribute opportunities to practice civic skills in a stratified manner, then individuals will continue to command stockpiles of participatory factors of very different sizes and, thus, to participate at very different rates. (pp. 532-533)

A Model of Library-Augmented Civic Engagement

Having outlined the pertinent, but disparate, literature concerning public libraries and civic engagement, it is clear that an imbalance exists between these two areas. While the literature concerning civic engagement is empirically backed and constitutes a thorough examination of the participatory elements of democratic practice, the literature concerning libraries is lacking. Librarianship sets forth claims concerning the democratic nature of libraries. It identifies the democratic aims of these agencies, as well as the professional and statutory support that exist to support such aims. What is left out is an exploration of the processes involved, as well as their effectiveness toward reaching said aims.

To addresses these omitted facets of the library literature, while adding to the literature concerning civic engagement in a novel capacity, it is necessary to begin building an empirical foundation on which library claims might more securely rest. To being this process, this dissertation offers its LACE theory as a means of more firmly connecting the literature librarianship and political science while exploring the functional nature of the public library's support for civic engagement.

Figure 2.1 details the LACE model, which places the library among those elements encapsulated by the SES model and the CVM. Although it is not central to this research, this model also accounts for the "civic-mindedness" that Putnam et al. (1994) identify as a byproduct of *social capital*. In this model social capital is represented as the medium in which civic engagement occurs. One might say that social capital it is the oil, while the processes involved represent the moving parts, of the democratic engine. Further, it is social capital that binds, strengthens, and indeed acts as a catalyst for those social elements that influence participatory activity.

Figure 2.1
The LACE Model
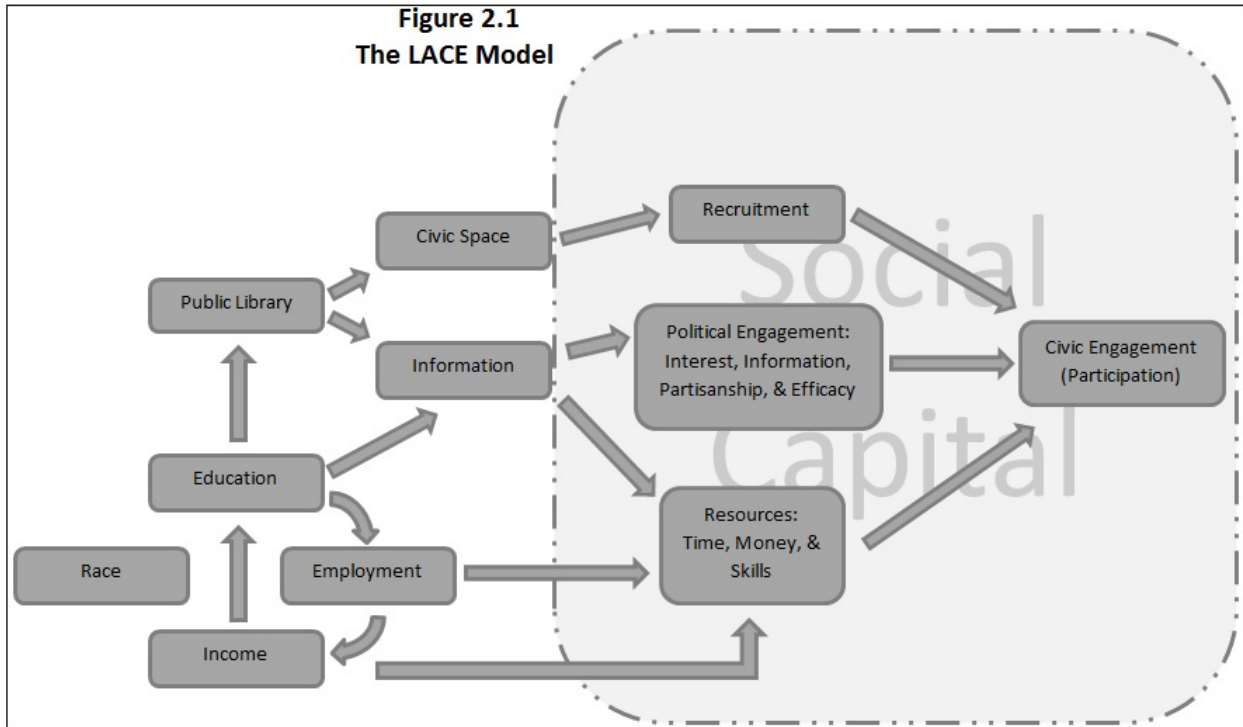
The LACE model aligns with the assertions of Verba et al. via the CVM, which importantly recognizes the predictive viability of the SES model. It shows socioeconomic status as a cycle defined by income, education, and employment, which all feed off of one another and together form the socioeconomic boundaries of a population. Of course, race is a closely related factor with regard to this particular segment of the model, and is therefore placed among those socioeconomic elements that affect an individual's level of resources, which can be supplemented peripherally through library usage. Civic engagement is most directly influenced by *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment*, which are fed by socioeconomic status (most notably, via *resources*, as per Verba et al.) and library usage, which provides for the augmentation of all three elements of the CVM.

The public library resides on the periphery of the model and provides access to information as well as a civic space for community interaction. These two elements combine to create educational opportunities that can, for example, provide alternate routes by which the

socioeconomically disadvantaged gain important civic skills, access to recruitment networks, and feed their desire to obtain information about political and civic matters. Thus, this model directly addresses the question of social equity it was the aim of library founders to secure with these agencies, and for which free and open access to information is a necessity.

While the model shown in Figure 2.1 is an attempt to illustrate the logical processes by which civic engagement comes about, it should not be understood as a complete model. The socio-political landscape in which human culture exists is far too complex to capture in such a model. One might say it is a problem of dimension. While it is simple enough to depict a three-dimensional object in two-dimensional space, the socio-political environment in which human culture exists has four, and likely more, dimensions to consider. For example, a two-dimensional model cannot capture changes over time, the effect of imbalanced influences from the model's constituent parts, or the complexity added by the six plus billion people that comprise the entirety of human culture. For these reasons, Figure 2.1 should be understood as a simplistic model that, while attempting to represent a social phenomenon, falls short of a holistic representation.

A Testable Theory

The theory behind the LACE model contends that public libraries, in offering access to information as well as a civic space for community interaction, supplement, and indeed strengthen, the *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* elements that comprise the CVM proposed by Verba et al. And while *social capital* is shown in the model proposed here, and the library as a *third place* is implied, this research does not speak directly to these elements. Instead, due to the exploratory nature of this research, the focus remains the public library's provision of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment*. The basic reasoning behind this decision is

to first address these foundational elements before moving on to more complex social phenomena tied to *social capital* and the library as *third place*, which will invariably require a qualitative methodological approach.

As stated in Chapter 1, the research question guiding this study is: *In what ways, if any, do public libraries augment those social elements that lead to greater civic engagement?* In attempting to answer this question, this research will test four hypotheses that surround the LACE theory:

H_1: Public libraries are a reflection of the communities they support, and therefore vary from community to community. Their offerings are directly affected by their monetary resources, which are directly affected by the socio-economic status of the community itself.

H_2: Due to various factors, most notably the socioeconomic status of the communities they serve, the "civicness" of public libraries, as defined by their provision of those services that are theoretically linked to increased levels of civic engagement among individuals, differs across communities.

H_3: Through their provision of information, services, and facilities, public libraries supplement the required elements of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* outlined in the CVM described by Verba et al.

H_4: The level of a library's influence on users' civic engagement is dependent upon the level of CVM element provision.

Implications of LACE Model

The discourse surrounding democracy is often driven by maxim. Perhaps this is due to what Jefferson termed the self-evident nature of those truths concerning freedom from the

domination that Shapiro (2003) states it is the purpose of democracy to minimize. While today's citizen has not lived under the particular brand of oppression that lead to the American revolution, domination has remained alive and well in many respects, even under the US Constitution. Many people have experienced, or can at least imagine, what it is like to live a life restrained and dictated upon by socio-political forces beyond one's control. So it is easy to simply proclaim general truths about freedom, and indeed avoid a discussion regarding the practical workings of a political regime meant to secure such benefit. That is to say, most individuals are able to describe the general nature of freedom, as well as the possible forms it might take in society, which satisfies the immediate need for common agreement on ideals and values. However, it is a much more substantive, but perhaps less emotionally fulfilling, discussion that approaches the means by which such freedom can be practically attained through organization.

The LACE model offered herein is an attempt to shift the discussion concerning the democratic nature of libraries from the maxim-driven to the data-driven. It is an attempt to move focus away from normative musings that concern an ideal and refocus on the empirical evidence that speaks to practical benefit. While there are many practical implications and benefits tied to democracy, the novel and exploratory aspects of this research requires one to focus on the most general aspects of each. Here, this means participation by the citizen, which provides for the most clearly identifiable, practical benefit that libraries supplement through their unique services.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the distinct and somewhat disparate literature of democracy, public libraries, and civic engagement has been reviewed and synthesized. The ideas surrounding the public library as a democratic entity have been fleshed out and connected to illustrate the current

state of the discourse surrounding this subject. Further, in outlining the pertinent theory

associated with civic engagement, gaps in the discourse surrounding libraries and democracy

have emerged. A logic model of the theory of *library-augmented civic engagement* has been

presented and explained. Further, a series of four hypotheses geared at testing this theory have

also been offered.

Chapter 3 - Methods and Data

As covered in the previous two chapters, this dissertation is, in the most general sense, aimed at exploring the democratic nature of public libraries. From the earliest days of America's public library movement, many have claimed these public agencies serve democracy in very basic but profound ways. Library scholars posit that public libraries provide necessary undergirding for American democratic principles via support for First Amendment[24] rights. Moreover, they contend that the open and free access to information that public libraries provide, coupled with the library profession's open rebuke of all forms of censorship, provides a strong and necessary support for what is often termed one's *freedom of expression*. In addition, case law has firmly established public libraries as *limited public fora*, which are venues established and protected by government to ensure an individual's ability to express or receive information and ideas in a peaceful, relatively uninhibited manner[25].

However, even with historical, professional, and statutory support in favor of a democratic public library service, there still exists an overt lack of empirical evidence regarding the practical value of the library's support for democratic principles. The historical mission can be attacked as nothing more than the normative desires of library founders. Likewise, the professional support that exists for this normative ideal might appear ineffective in the face of a growing *problem of purpose* that sees traditional egalitarian values supplanted by commercially-driven models of library service. Lastly, the statutory support that public libraries enjoy, relative to their provision of uncensored information and civic space, provides the most solid evidence of these agencies' outward support of democratic principles. However, the case can be made that

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[24] The reader should consider here that the Bill of Rights is the most important section of the US constitution, with regard to establishing the republic's intentions toward the individual—personal freedoms and protections.
[25] The expression and receipt of information and ideas can be inhibited within a limited public forum, if the method of said expression or receipt exists outside the realm of established norms within that space.

this support arises from the library itself, but rather is bestowed upon that agency from an external source. The fact is that this narrative lacks a strong, empirical basis by which the democratic value of libraries might be confirmed.

Bearing this in mind, this dissertation expands the scholarship concerning public libraries and democracy by examining the degree to which civic engagement is promoted by these agencies. Using the CVM of Verba et al. as a theoretical framework, this study investigates whether libraries affect those *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* needs of users, which Verba et al. would contend are determining factors of civic engagement.

At the conclusion of the previous chapter a testable theory of *library-augmented civic engagement* was offered for consideration. This theory places the public library within the midst of previously offered theories of civic engagement that incorporate socioeconomic status and various economic models of political decision making and participation. Moreover, the novel model proposed portrays the library as a reflection of community culture, or the partial byproduct of the overall socioeconomic status of its host community. Consequently, through its provision of information and civic space, the public library augments the CVM elements of *engagement*, *recruitment*, and *resources*.

In the pages that follow, this chapter outlines the methods and variables used in the two-phase analytical approach employed by this study. Importantly, this approach has been designed to answer the central research question: *In what ways, if any, do public libraries augment those social elements that lead to greater civic engagement?* Moreover, the preliminary phase of this study uses an organizational analysis of public libraries that will test the following two hypotheses:

H_1: Public libraries are a reflection of the communities they support, and therefore vary across communities. Their offerings are directly affected by available monetary resources, which are directly affected by the overall socio-economic condition of the community itself.

H_2: Due to various factors, most notably the socioeconomic condition of the communities they serve, the "civicness" of public libraries, as defined by their provision of those services that are theoretically linked to increased levels of civic engagement among individuals, differs across communities.

The second phase of this study utilizes a survey of library users to investigate any causal links that might exist between library usage and civic engagement. This portion of the study tests the following two hypotheses:

H_3: Through their provision of information, services, and facilities, public libraries augment the required elements of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* outlined in the CVM described by Verba et al.

H_4: The level of a library's influence on users' civic engagement is dependent upon said library's level of CVM element augmentation (the civicness of said library).

An Organizational Analysis of Alabama Public Libraries

The preliminary stage of this study takes the form of an organizational analysis meant to expose important variations that exist across public libraries. Such variations include differences in: revenue, facilities, collections, services, and library usage. In addition, an original content analysis of public library websites provides qualitative data that speaks to the nature of services provided by these public libraries. Analyzed as a whole, these data help to define a *range of library civicness* across the entire population of Alabama public libraries.

Public libraries have the potential to differ greatly from one community to the next (Garceau, 1972; Pungitore, 1989; Rose, 1954; Shavit, 1986). This is the result of several factors that relate to: the library's nature as a public agency; what might be termed the social, political, or cultural uniqueness of the communities that libraries serve; and even the very nature of the information services that libraries provide. First, as public agencies, libraries exist at several different levels of the politico-administrative hierarchy (Pungitore, 1989; Rose, 1954; Shavit, 1986). That is to say, libraries may be formed, as well as fall under the political and administrative control of local, county, state, or national government. In addition, libraries can present several different types of governance structures, of which the two most common are governance by a board of trustees and direct municipal governance (Garceau, 1972; Rose, 1954; Shavit, 1986).

Variations are also seen in the *local identity* of each library, which forms at the nexus of local issues and priorities, political (monetary) support, and the expansive nature of information services. Pungnitore (1989) elaborates, stating:

> The library that serves a sparsely populated farming community will function differently from one that is located in a suburban "bedroom" community near a large city. The library serving a major metropolitan area that is experiencing industrial plant closings and high unemployment will emphasize services that differ from those where there is economic growth from an influx of high technology industries. The library that functions as a branch of a county library system may serve a community equal in population to one that is served by an "independent" library, but the size and nature of their collections can be quite different. (p. 169)

As Pungnitore (1989) suggests, the complexity of organizational variance among libraries rests, in part, on the fact that a change in scale does not necessarily correlate with simply more or less of the same services. In fact, a change in scale may result in absolutely no difference in the range of services provided by two libraries. A library that serves the large service population of a metropolitan area may circulate more books and provide a wider range of services than a library that serves a smaller suburban population. Alternatively, the suburban library might circulate more books or provide a wider range of services, due to higher levels of available revenue or a more committed legion of local volunteers that result from what Putnam et al. (1994) would call a higher degree of *civicness* within the community. Rose (1954) eloquently summarizes this issue, stating:

> The steps of the progress of the American public library have been experimental, tentative, and responsive to local need. Inevitably, then, their development has been uneven and presents today a lack of uniformity which bewilders librarians themselves and is highly misleading to people in general. (pp. 9-10)

For these reasons, this dissertation utilizes an organizational analysis of public libraries that: (a) provides a contextual understanding of those public libraries present in the population, and (b) identifies a service-based *range of library civicness* that defines the spectrum of civic influence represented by those libraries studied here.

Value of an Organizational Analysis

An organizational analysis of public libraries helps to quantify the complexity[26] to which previous library scholars have alluded, but not fully explored. Such an analysis also provides contextual insight for those who have only a user's understanding of these agencies. This

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[26] i.e., variations in funding, collections, and services

analysis utilizes secondary data in tandem with an original content analysis of public library websites. Secondary data is sourced from two locations: a 2010 organizational survey conducted by the IMLS and the 2010 US Census. With these data, which comprise 45 variables used in this analysis (see Table 3.1), this dissertation will highlight the most basic organizational differences that exist among public libraries with regard to service provision and usage.

It should be noted that IMLS data can speak only to the most general aspects of those traditional services provided by libraries—material circulation, facility access, adult and children's program attendance, and reference services. These data do not speak to the full range of services provided by libraries, especially those that are unique to particular service populations. For example, one cannot determine the types[27] of programming offered; these data provide no insight into the degree of civic space provided via public meeting rooms or lecture halls. For these reasons, an original content analysis of public library websites is used here to flesh out any related inconsistencies that exist across public libraries—especially those that are likely to have an effect on these agencies' ability to promote civic engagement among their users. The *range of library civicness* fashioned from this analysis bolsters the LACE theory offered herein, acting also as the first step toward defining a meaningful typology of public libraries that is based on their support of practical democratic functions.

Content Analysis

"Content analysis is a technique which aims to improve the quality of the inferences we make…based on analyzing communications, be they verbal, written, or even pictorial" (Carney, 1972, p. XV). It requires objectivity, system, and generality (Holsti, 1969).

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[27] Here, *type* relates to the subject matter addressed during any particular library program.

Objectivity stipulates that each step in the research process must be carried out on the

basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures…*Systematic* means that the inclusion

and exclusion of content categories is done according to consistently applied

rules…*Generality*, then, requires that the findings must have theoretical relevance.

(Holsti, 1969, pp. 4-5)

Furthermore, content analysis is an appropriate method to use when: (a) data accessibility is a

problem; (b) given certain theoretical components, language of the subject is crucial to the

investigation; and (c) the volume of material to be examined exceeds the investigator's ability to

undertake the research alone (Holsti, 1969).

Content analysis is used in this portion of the study for several important reasons. First,

this research is exploratory in nature. The scope of literature on public libraries in relation to

democracy and civic engagement is rather narrow, especially in the vein of empirical findings.

Moreover, libraries are information dealers, negotiating what many have termed an *Information*

Revolution that takes shape as society's shift from an industrial to a post-industrial era[28].

Libraries are changing in a rapid, asymmetrical fashion. Further, this sort of change and

inconsistency poses a stiff challenge to fashioning an effective survey or set of interview

questions, as an asymmetric knowledge gap is difficult to navigate without a more generalizable

understanding of the matter at hand. Content analysis can provide such generalizable

understandings.

Second, the temporal and monetary constraints under which this research is being conducted do

not lend themselves well to a complex and lengthy survey or interview-based research study,

which would provide the only other viable data solution for this subject matter. The fact is that

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[28] Bell (1976) describes the post-industrial era as that epoch that directly follows the industrial era, in which social and economic focus shifts from production of industrial technologies to the production of information technologies.

there are activities occurring at libraries to which the researcher is not privy and therefore cannot approach efficiently or effectively. This subject matter has not been fully defined within the literature of librarianship or public administration and, while some normative theory is offered, few if any empirical studies exist. Once again, these constraints are what help to define this study as *exploratory research*, geared toward the investigation of matters that are newly developed, expanding, or perhaps have never been fully considered.

Content analysis provides a solid analytical platform for generating new theory. Organizational websites are robust troves of information and, in the case of libraries, often provide important information regarding their facilities, collections, and services (Aharony, 2012). Further, recent research shows that library users visit their local library's website more often than library facilities, which helps to highlight their importance (Aharony, 2012). Lastly, this content analysis will support the development of a study to be conducted at the individual level of analysis, which provides a more effective means of identifying any library-centric theoretical categories that are applicable to civic engagement theory.

Guiding Theory

Previous library literature has dictated that public libraries provide a wide range of information and ideas to the public that bolster First Amendment protections (e.g., Durrance et al., 2001; Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993b; Heanue, 2001; Kretchmer, 2001; Stielow, 2001). Moreover, such provision exists, and is actively supported by society vis-à-vis public policy, as evidenced by the relevant case law, which mostly revolves around the status of public libraries as *limited public fora* or *civic spaces* (Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993b; Kretchmer, 2001). So clearly there are some aspects of public libraries that intersect with the American

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Table 3.1

Variables: Organizational Analysis

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Name	Definition
Library Name	Name by which a library is identified
County	County where a library is located
Service Population	Size (in persons) of a library's legally-defined service area
Income (per capita)	Per capita income associated with a library's service population.
Librarians	Number of library staff who hold a Master's Degree in Library Science or Library and Information Services, and occupy a professional librarian position
Total Librarians	Number of library staff that occupy a professional librarian position
Librarians (per thousand)	Number of professional librarians per thousand of the service population
Total Staff	Number of paid library staff employed by a library
Local Revenue	Local tax revenue received by a library
Local Revenue (per capita)	Local tax revenue received by a library, as a per capita measure relative to service population
State Revenue	State tax revenue received by a library
State Revenue (per capita)	State tax revenue received by a library, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Federal Revenue	Federal tax revenue received by a library
Capital Revenue	Tax revenue received by a library that is earmarked for capital expenditures
Other Revenue	Non-tax revenue received by a library (e.g., grants or donations)
Total Revenue	Total revenue received by a library
Total Revenue (per capita)	Total revenue received by a library, as a per capita measure relative to that library's service population
Collection Expenditures	Monies expended toward print or electronic collections
Collection Expenditures (per capita)	Monies expended toward print or electronic library collections, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Staff Expenditures	Monies expended toward library staff
Staff Expenditures (per capita)	Monies expended toward library staff as a per capita measure relative to service population
Capital Expenditures	Monies expended toward capital projects
Capital Expenditures (per capita)	Monies expended toward capital projects, as a per capita measure relative to service population

Other Operating Expenditures	Monies expended toward library operations, which fall outside the realm of *collection, staff,* or *capital* expenditures
Operating Expenditures	Total monies expended toward library operations (*collection*, *staff*, *capital*, and *other* expenditures)
Operating Expenditures (per capita)	Total monies expended toward library operations, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Print Materials	Volumes of print materials held by a library
Serial Materials	Volumes of print serial (e.g., journals) materials held by a library
Electronic Serial Materials	Volumes of electronic serials held by a library
Video Materials	Video materials (by item count) held by a library
Audio Materials	Audio materials (by item count) held by a library
E-Books	E-book titles held by a library
Databases	Number of subscription databases to which a library provides access
Circulation	Total material circulation among a library's users
Children's Circulation	Total children's material circulation among a library's users
Circulation (per capita)	Total material circulation among a library's users, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Visits	Number of facility visitations recorded by a library (number of times the building was entered)
Visits (per capita)	Number of facility visitations recorded by a library, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Programs	Number of individual library programs administered by a library
Programs (per capita)	Number of individual library programs administered by a library, as a per capita measure relative to service population
Program Attendance	Number of individuals who attend a library program
Children's Program Attendance	Number of individuals who attend library programs for children
Reference Transactions	Number of reference questions answered by library staff
Computer Terminals	Number of public-use computer terminals made available by a library

democratic experience. The question remains, however, as to how these aspects might play into library users' proclivities for civic engagement.

There are several studies that speak directly to the involvement of organizations in promoting civic engagement among individuals. Churches, in particular, have been characterized as engines of civic engagement among their parishioners (Brown and Brown, 2003; Brown, 2006; Cavendish, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). Specifically, it has been suggested that churches provide for both the opportunities to attain and hone civic skills, as well as access to active recruitment networks that promote higher levels of civic engagement. In addition, several studies have explored how active participation in civic associations can build social capital within communities, which leads to further participation at the individual level (Brown, 2006; Putnam et al., 1994; Verba et al., 1995). These two facts lead to the research question guiding this study's content analysis: *In what ways, if any, do public libraries augment those social elements that lead to greater civic engagement?* More specifically, are public libraries providing their users with opportunities to: secure those resources needed to effectively participate (e.g., civic skills), make contact with active recruitment networks (build important social capital), as well as inform and bolster their political interests?

Content Analysis Method

A targeted population of Alabama public libraries is identified from the larger pool of US public libraries. The unit of analysis for this portion of the study is the public library. A directory of 208 Alabama libraries listed on publiclibraries.com[29], cross-referenced by a similar[30] directory

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[29] http://www.publiclibraries.com/alabama.htm (accessed 02/01-04/30, 2012)
[30] The directory compiled by the Alabama Public Library Service did not have as many listings as the one provided by publiclibraries.com

offered on the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) website[31] and IMLS data for the state of

Alabama, is used as to identify the population for analysis. Links provided by

publiclibraries.com are used to navigate to the websites of several libraries. For those libraries

which are listed without links, or listed by the APLS but not by publiclibraries.com, web

searches are conducted using library names as search terms to determine what, if any, web

presence[32] exists for the initially identified population.

Out of the 208 libraries identified, 140 (67%) have some sort of web presence. Out of

these 140, only 115 (82%) maintain a web presence that allows for the type of analysis used

here. That is to say, only 115 libraries offer websites with enough pertinent information related

to facilities and services for the researcher to analyze. There are also 37 libraries for which

incomplete data is provided within the IMLS data set. Therefore, these libraries are simply

eliminated and the sample is reduced to 78 libraries (N=78).

To begin, IMLS data is used to target those libraries with the highest levels of *total*

revenue for preliminary analysis. It makes sense to target these libraries first, as revenue is

generally the most decisive factor affecting resource-based library offerings. Therefore, one

would often expect these libraries to provide the widest range of possible facilities, collections,

and services (Pungitore, 1989). Beginning the content analysis with these libraries helps one

avoid unnecessary analytical backtracking. That is to say, one can keep reevaluation of

previously coded websites to a minimum by beginning the investigation with those library

websites that will likely source the largest number of analytical categories.

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[31] http://webmini.apls.state.al.us/apls_web/apls/apls (accessed 02/01-04/30, 2012)
[32] *Web presence* refers to any type of web-based informational site administered by a library. This could mean a traditional website that is comprised of unique content designed by library personnel, or a social networking presence such as a Facebook page.

Importantly, this content analysis relies on both deductive and inductive elements. Its deductive elements are built upon the guiding theory briefly outlined in the section above and in Chapter 2, along with the researcher's professional knowledge[33] of typical public library offerings. Further, these elements point this analysis in the direction of searching for facilities and events that relate to each library's provision of civic space or opportunities for social interaction in a formal, associational setting. Later, these findings are used inductively to generate theory regarding a typology of public libraries that speaks to these organizations' true complexity. As Pungitore (1989) notes, previous typologies based on the mere size of collections, services, or user base have not been effective at delineating the full spectrum of differences that exist across libraries. In addition, findings of this content analysis will help to inform an individual-level study of any influence libraries have on the civic engagement levels of their users.

Analysis and Coding

A thorough navigation-based investigation of each library's website(s) is needed to compile data that can speak to the manner in which libraries differ, if at all, with regard to their support or promotion of civic engagement. This means navigating through every hyperlink within each website and carefully inspecting the contents of each webpage that comprises the entirety of a library's web presence. This includes the investigation of textual web posts, calendar entries[34], and pictures[35] (where applicable). Each website is analyzed, primarily, to help establish a core set of analytical categories that relate to that theoretical framework established in

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[33] The author has ten years of experience as a professional librarian.

[34] Many libraries provide a calendar of events on their websites. These calendars provide useful information concerning meetings and programs held in the library. When such calendars are encountered during this analysis, all entries are inspected as far back as one year from the study date (when possible).

[35] In the absence of overt web postings or announcements concerning meetings or programs, online photos posted by a library can be helpful in providing such information.

Chapter 2. Any new category that surfaces during this process is added to the codebook and previously analyzed websites are then revisited to ensure the web presence of all sampled libraries is systematically analyzed with the same criteria in mind.

At data saturation, this content analysis produces 18 total variables, 13 of which represent analytical subcategories that fall under the two main civic service categories of *meetings* and *programs* (see Table 3.2). The *meetings* category encapsulates public meeting room rental services, as well as the existence, and type, of meetings held within those facilities, with or without the room rental service[36]. While the policies governing room rental services, when applicable, differ across sample libraries, that level of detail is not recorded nor discussed herein. With regard to the existence and types of meetings that occur in libraries, five main types are coded: *library civic meeting*, *non-library civic meeting*, *non-library organizational meeting*, *social meeting*, and *political meeting* (see Table 3.2 for definitions).

The *Programs* category covers all library-sponsored programming that takes place at a given library. A *program* is a planned, one-time occurrence, or systematic series of: lectures, exhibits, or social activities. The three main categories of programming often mentioned in reference to public libraries are *adult*, *youth*, and *children's* programming. Through this analysis, each of these categories is confirmed. In addition, four additional subtypes of programs are identified: *civic programming*, *educational programming*, *cultural programming*, and *arts programming* (see Table 3.2 for definitions).

An Excel spreadsheet with IMLS and Census data entered into columns and cross-referenced by library locations entered into rows, is used as a codebook. Each category discovered through this content analysis is added as a column and coded with a dummy variable.

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[36] Several libraries do host library-related, civic meetings, but do not offer meeting room rental space to all users.

The number one (1.00) is recorded for any affirmative connection discovered between a library and an analytical category, while a zero (0.00) is recorded if no connection is found.

Only three US Census indicators are used in this study: *median household income*, *educational attainment* (as a percentage measure of collegiate degree holders), and *income (per capita)*. Further, due to the fact that IMLS data do not align perfectly with those data provided by the US Census Bureau, it is important to select the data which fits best. Specifically, the unit of analysis used in the IMLS survey is the public library, while the US census uses various populations[37] as the unit of analysis. This can prove problematic when dealing with libraries that serve populations that can either span one city or an entire county. Understanding this, a simple method was used to match the proper US Census data to each library. For those counties with only one public library, the US Census data corresponding to that entire county is used. For those counties with several library locations, the US Census data that corresponds to the host towns or cities of each library are used.

As a final step, calculations are performed to derive three key measures: a *meeting score*, a *programming score*, and a composite *Civic Array Score* (CAS). In the case of both the *meeting score* (ranging from 0.00 – 6.00) and *programming score* (ranging from 0.00 – 7.00), the dummy variables corresponding to each programming or meeting sub-category are simply summed to produce a composite score for the entire main category. The CAS can range from zero (0.00) to 13.00, with higher scores denoting a greater connection between that library and those activities that have the potential to affect a user's civic engagement. With data gathering complete, all data are transferred from Microsoft Excel to SPSS[38] for descriptive and inferential analyses.

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[37] e.g., county, city, and town

[38] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is a software package that can be used to conduct statistical analyses.

Having shown how libraries vary across communities, especially with regard to their promotion of those activities that can potentially affect users' civic engagement, this study now turns back to the central research question at hand. Specifically, this study will attempt to determine in what ways, if any, public library use affects an individual's propensity for civic engagement. To help answer this question, this study uses a library user survey to shift its level of analysis to the individual.

Library users are surveyed for several reasons. First, survey data will help to confirm or refute the previous findings of this study's organizational analysis. More specifically, survey data will help to confirm the range of facilities, collections, and services provided by each of the selected libraries, as outlined within this study's organizational analysis. Second, these surveys are designed to reveal the nature of each user's social, political, and civic interactions with the library, its staff, as well as other users. Third, civic engagement is the product of individuals' actions, so any causal model should take form at the individual level of analysis. Moreover, this study's survey will help to establish levels of civic engagement among library users, as defined by the wide range of activities and personal characteristics cited by Verba et al. (1995).

Public Library User Survey

This study uses a public library user survey as a means of collecting the cross-sectional data required to test H_3 and H_4. Bernard (2000) notes, that "…self-administered questionnaires are preferable to personal interviews when three conditions are met: (1) You are dealing with literate respondents; (2) you are confident of getting a high response rate; and (3) the questions you want to ask do not require a face-to-face interview or the use of visual aids…" (p. 237). This

Table 3.2

Variables: Content Analysis	
Name	**Definition**
Website	Presence of a website for any particular library
Social Media	Presence of social media site for any particular library
Civic Array Score (CAS)	Score of relative civicness given to a library based on program and meeting offerings
Room Rental	Provision of a meeting room rental service by a particular library
Library Civic Meeting	Hosting of meetings of library-related organizations that have missions of a civic nature
Non-Library Organizational Meeting	Hosting of the meetings of a non-library organization
Non-Library Civic Meeting	Hosting of the meetings of a non-library organizations that relate to civic matters
Social Meeting	Hosting of the meetings of social clubs (e.g., book club, knitting circle, chess club, etc.)
Political Meeting	Hosting of meetings of a political nature (e.g., clubs that take political stands, or discuss political issues)
Meeting Score	Additive score that represents a library's commitment to hosting public meetings
Adult Programming	Provision of library programs that cater to adult users (ages 18 and up)
Youth Programming	Provision of library programs that cater to youth users (ages 10 and up)
Children's Programming	Provision of library programs that cater to child users (ages 9 and under)
Civic Programming	Provision of library programs of a civic nature (programs geared at affecting social change)
Educational Programming	Provision of library programs of an educational nature (programs that aim at imparting specific knowledge or skills - outside the realm of reading-based skills attainment)
Cultural Programming	Provision of library programs of a cultural nature (programs that aim to impart users with a deeper understanding of any particular socio-ethnic culture, which could be local or foreign)
Arts Programming	Provision of library programs of an artistic nature (programs that aim at imparting or displaying artistic skill in any of the visual or performing arts)
Programming Score	Additive score that represents a particular library's commitment to the provision of a variety of user programs

research does indeed meet these three criteria, and for this reason one might expect more information for the investment of time and money, as Bernard (2000) points out is the case with self-administered questionnaires.

The unit of analysis here is the individual library user, which provides the best opportunity to fashion a causal model of public library use and any affect it has on a user's level of civic engagement. However, while use of survey research is prolific, and often considered a relatively safe and easy approach in the social sciences, there are still many considerations to be made with regard to the design and administration of a survey. Here especially, the wide range of phenomena for which data must be gathered is a cause for concern. Data is required to determine: respondents' general library usage levels, the range of activities associated with that usage, and the degree to which respondents participate in those activities that fall under the umbrella of civic engagement. Data is also needed to explore certain demographic and personal/professional characteristics of the respondent that might either directly relate to civic engagement or provide valuable contextual understandings to this research.

A survey methodology makes sense for a few reasons. First, the only way to obtain the data necessary for this research is from the individual library user (by asking them). While an approach that utilizes interviews might also accomplish this task, the additional time and expense required for an interview-based, case study approach is not feasible here. It is for the same reasons that a cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal, design is used—a lack of resources prevents such a study at this time.

Constructing the Survey

In constructing this study's survey tool, there are two competing interests to bear in mind—those of the respondent and those of the research. First, most individuals do not enjoy

filling out surveys, let alone are they likely to visit their local public library aiming to participate in such an activity. For this reason, any survey instrument used to study library users should make efficient use of a respondent's time. The survey should be as short as possible, while also capable of providing the data needed to test predicative models.

Second, the public library draws a wide variety of users. Some of these users are highly educated, while others are less so. For this reason, the survey must be understandable to a broad spectrum of social groups. Third, due to the subject matter at hand, the survey must be comprehensive in many ways. As discussed in Chapter 2, the nature of civic engagement and democracy is quite complex. Moreover, this complexity often requires one to gather data related to a wide range of social phenomena. This factor makes for extremely difficult circumstances, as a survey that is both efficient and comprehensive can seem a contradiction in terms. For this reason it is important to avoid redundancy in the survey questions, as well as know when a question, while it may provide interesting data, is not absolutely necessary to answering the study's research question.

As deLeeuw, Hox, and Dillman (2009) note, all good surveys begin with identifying those concepts to be measured. Here these concepts fall into the three main categories: respondents' public library usage, respondents' civic engagement, and respondents' socioeconomic and other demographic attributes. After identifying the central concepts, the next step is to operationalize these concepts—turning them into measureable variables (deLeeuw et al., 2009). To do this, the professional knowledge of the author as a librarian, in conjunction with data uncovered by the preliminary organizational analysis and a review of the pertinent scholarly literature, are used to break down each concept into several measureable variables. This will be explained further in the *Variables and Coding* section to follow.

Cognitive testing is used to ensure the survey is clear, concise, and ready for use. A copy of the survey and informed consent statement are given to 10 professional librarians that comprise a cognitive testing group (CTG). Each librarian is instructed to read through the survey and note any questions or phrasing that seems unclear or problematic. The CTG is also asked to judge the approach and tone of the survey to help flesh out any problems that might lead to individuals not completing the survey. With feedback received, the survey and informed consent statement are edited to fix any problem areas identified the CTG. The edited version is then shared with the cognitive testing group for final approval.

Survey Sampling

The complete findings of this study's organizational analysis will not be discussed until Chapter 5. However, it is necessary to note one particular finding here, as it relates to the methodological approach used in this portion of the study. The organizational analysis does expose a *range of library civicness* that is likely to affect a library's ability to influence users' attainment of civic skills and access to active recruitment networks. For this reason, this study will control for these variations by selecting one library from each end and the center of that range. As findings in Chapter 5 will show, this approach provides for analyses with greater explanatory power.

Using this study's organizational analysis as a sampling frame, three sample clusters are identified vis-à-vis three separate public libraries and their corresponding user populations. As previously mentioned, one library is selected from the lower end of the range of observed CAS scores (*Site A*), another library from the higher end (*Site C*), and a third from close to the middle (*Site B*). The researcher contacts the directors at each library via phone to discuss the project and

obtain permission to collect data on site. The phone call is followed up with an email, which acts as a record of formal permission for data collection having been received.

The researcher then visits each library and uses an intercept survey approach to solicit participation from library users at each location. In order to fashion a sample that is representative of each library's entire user population, data are collected across the entire range of each library's hours of operation. In order to track the time of contact with respondents, a portion of the identification code used on each survey incorporates either an "M," "A," or "E." These letters represent the words *morning*, *afternoon*, and *evening*. Morning hours are between opening and 11:59am. Afternoon hours range from 12:00pm to 5pm. Evening hours are from 5pm to close.

Administering the Survey

This study uses a self-administered survey to gather data from library users. While a web-based survey is much easier to administer, this was not a viable option for this study. Public libraries serve users from a variety of socio-economic classes. This means that some users may not own a computer or have internet access at their home. In addition, while most public libraries do provide computers and internet access to users, such access varies. For these reasons a paper survey is best.

To help promote survey participation, the researcher utilizes an in-person intercept method of survey distribution and offers a lottery-based incentive[39]. At each of the three library sites, the researcher establishes a *project storefront* in the form of a table in the library's lobby (directly inside of the main library entrance), which users can approach to ask questions about

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[39] Each respondent can provide their name and contact information on a separate piece of paper, which will be used as their entry for a $100 drawing. This $100 in cash comes from the researchers own pocket and is conducted after data gathering is complete.

the project and receive a survey. A sign is also used to advertise the project to library users as they enter the library facility.

As a librarian, the researcher is keenly aware of customer service considerations related to the provision of library services. In particular, the types of services provided by libraries are such that a certain level of anonymity and self-imposed segregation among users should be expected and respected. Library users often do not appreciate active solicitation while on their varied personal missions to obtain information. It is important to support the customer service goals of the library that is hosting the research. Appealing and effective signage helps the researcher to avoid the unwanted invasion of library users' personal space and privacy. A sign provides library users with an opportunity to approach the researcher and participate without intrusive or excessive prompting from the researcher.

The researcher also makes a point to greet all library users with a friendly salutation, such as "Good morning!" or "Good afternoon!" as they enter the facility. Users who slow to read the sign, or respond with their own friendly salutation are asked if they have a few minutes to take an anonymous survey about public library use and civic engagement. At this point, the user either states they are not interested, or inquires more deeply into the project. Such inquiries are greeted with a brief, scripted explanation[40], along with a copy of this study's informed consent statement[41] and survey.

A unique *survey identification code* (SID) is used to track the number of surveys distributed, as well as the location and approximate time of respondent contact. This SID is printed at the top of each survey. For example, the SID "CEN-034-A" indicates that the survey is

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[40] A summarized version of the informed consent statement is used.
[41] A copy of this consent statement can be found in Appendix D

the 34th survey distributed at the public library nicknamed "CEN" and that contact was made with the respondent during afternoon hours.

Variables and Coding

A total of 26 variables from 131 data points (see Table 3.3 below) are produced by this study's survey[42]. *Civic engagement* is the primary dependent variable of interest, and is comprised of the two sub-variables: *civic participation* and *political participation*. This study also produces four primary independent variables: *library usage*, *political engagement*[43], *recruitment*, and *resources*. Each of these independent variables is also comprised of several sub-variables that will be outlined in further detail below.

Whenever possible, this research attempts to build off the previous research of Verba et al. by using similar variable definitions and methodological approaches. The dependent variable used in this study, as well as all but one of the independent variables, *library usage*, are defined, collected, and coded in a manner that is consistent with those data and methods[44] employed by Verba et al. However, as the work of Verba et al. used a semi-structured interview method and this research uses a survey method, complete methodological replication is not possible.

Civic Engagement

In Chapter 1, *civic engagement* is defined as "individuals' active participation in matters of a civic or political nature." Here that definition is operationalized as the degree to which an individual takes part in a host of purely social or traditionally political activities, as indicated by

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[42] A copy of the survey used in this study can be found in Appendix E

[43] Political engagement is a factor described within the work of Verb a et al. and differs from the primary dependent variable of interest in this study, civic engagement. This will be explained in further detail in the *Political Engagement* section of this chapter.

[44] For a detailed account of the data collection methods employed by Verba et al., see *Appendix B* in: Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press.

their answers to a set of 23 survey questions modeled after those used by Verba et al. Furthermore, this variable is broken down into its two constituent parts: *political participation* and *civic participation*. By including the two sub-variables, a more articulated and meaningful analysis is possible[45]. *Political participation* encompasses participation in those activities that are directly linked to the election of public officials or influencing public policy through direct contact with such officials. *Civic participation* encompasses participation in those non-political activities that help define, for the participant, some degree of integration or unity within their local community.

Survey questions (SQ) 21 through SQ43[46] of this study's survey collectively establish each respondent's level of civic engagement[47]. All but one of these questions[48] uses a Likert-based frequency score[49] (LFS) to measure the relative amount of civic or political activity in which the respondent has been involved over the previous four years[50]. All responses are coded with an evenly-weighted scoring system that ranges from zero (0.00) to one (1.00). A measure of *political participation* is derived from the additive score of SQ21 through SQ31. A measure of *civic participation* is derived by the additive score of SQ32 through SQ34. An aggregate score derived from the sum of scores for *political participation* and *civic participation* produces the overall measure of *civic engagement*.

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[45] This technique is used with several variables throughout this study.

[46] Please see Appendix E for a complete listing of survey questions.

[47] Four of these questions also attempt to establish what role, if any, the public library plays in any of these activities.

[48] The only question that does not use a Likert scale asks if respondents are registered to vote in their residential county. The answer options are "yes" and "no."

[49] All Likert scales of frequency used in this study are four to five-point, evenly-weighted, Likert scales that provide respondents with a range of response choices that help to measure the frequency with which a respondent engages in a particular activity.

[50] The duration of four years is used, as it corresponds to the presidential term of office, which is a standard political period with which most individuals are familiar.

Library Usage

At its most general, *library usage* consists of any combination of facility, collection, and service utilization by an individual. *Facilities* are simply the library building, as well as those physical spaces and any equipment it contains. *Collections* are defined as the information resources made available by the library. These resources include any print, electronic, audio, or video materials. *Services* consist of any formal provision of those facilities and collections previously mentioned.

Library usage is operationalized here as the product of *library visitation* and *library utilization*. *Library visitation* is operationalized as the regularity of an individual's visits to the library facility, and is measured using an LFS attached to SQ1. *Library utilization* is operationalized as the degree to which an individual utilizes those facilities, collections, and services offered by a library. It is comprised of the two sub-variables *resource and service utilization* and *civic space utilization*, which are derived from aggregate LFS measured via SQ2 and SQ3 that are multiplied by the LFS for *library visitation*[51]. An aggregate measure of *library usage* is derived using the sum of measures for *library visitation*, *resource and service utilization*, and *civic space utilization*. A respondent's answers to the first four parts of the eight-part SQ2 determine their level of *general resource and service utilization*. *Civic space utilization* is a composite (additive) score of the LFS for: *civic service utilization*, *civic resource utilization*, and library-based *social interaction*. *Civic resource utilization* is an LFS derived from the sum of scores for the three-part SQ3, and acts as a measure of a respondent's level of *library usage* in

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[51] By multiplying a respondent's resource and service utilization by their library visitation, one is able to mimic the reality of the situation. For example, a person who engages in reading the newspaper "often" when they visit the library, but visits "rarely" will in fact engage in the activity less than the person who "often" reads the newspaper when at the library and visits "often."

the vein of seeking information that concerns matters of a civic or political nature. This includes information about: political issues, government programs, and local events.

Civic service utilization is an LFS derived from the sum of scores for parts five through eight of SQ2. Further, it acts as a measure of a respondent's library usage, as it relates to those services provided by the library, which brings them into contact with other community members. Services of this type include: attending library programs or events, attending meetings of other social clubs or groups, as well as taking part in decision-making, and leading such groups. Each part of this question is given an LFS, which are summed to produce the composite score.

Library-based *social interaction* is the measure of a respondent's conversation-based social interactions with *library staff* and other *library users*. Each of these sub-measures is derived from an LFS gathered via the two-part SQ4, which is used by respondents to indicate their frequency of conversation with "other library users" and "library staff." A second question, SQ5, utilizes a series of checkboxes that a respondent uses to indicate the full, content-based spectrum of those conversational interactions. The data gathered via SQ5 is not used to derive the *social interaction* variable, but is instead used for the purpose of descriptive analyses only.

Political Engagement

Political engagement (*engagement*) is one of three independent elements within the CVM devised by Verba et al., and is defined as a variety of psychological dispositions that make a person want to participate in civic or political activities. Further, this concept is broken down into four constituent parts: *political interest*, *political efficacy*, *political information*, and *political partisanship*[52]. *Political interest* is the level of personal interest an individual expresses with regard to matters of a political nature, such as election outcomes and current political events. For

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[52] Variables used in this study that correspond to these concepts will carry these same names.

this study, an individual's political interest is measured by their answers to SQ7 and SQ8, which ask them to indicate their level of interest in local and national politics using a four-point Likert scale. Respondent opinion is gauged using this scale with a range of opinion stretching from "no interest at all" to "very interested." Answers to these questions are then coded with an evenly-weighted, four-point, quantitative scale ranging from zero (0.00), for "no interest at all," to one (1.00), for "very interested." The average score of these two questions represents a respondent's level of *political interest*.

Political efficacy relates to an individual's perceived ability to affect political change through participation in civic or political activities. This study uses a series of four questions, SQ11 through SQ14, to measure a respondent's perceived level of political efficacy. Two of these questions ask a respondent to indicate how much "attention" they might receive if taking a complaint to local or national government. The remaining two questions ask a respondent to indicate how much influence they believe themselves to have in decision-making at the local and national levels of government, respectively. These four questions are also coded using an evenly-weighted, four-point, quantitative scale ranging from zero (0.00) to one (1.00). An aggregate score is then derived from the sum of all four questions to indicate a respondent's *political efficacy*.

Political information represents an individual's personal knowledge on matters of a political nature. A series of seven, fill-in-the-blank, general knowledge questions, SQ15 through SQ20[53], are posed to respondents. Correct answers are scored with a one (1.00) and incorrect answers are scored with a zero (0.00). An aggregate score is derived from the sum of scores for this series of questions to act as a measure of *political information*.

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[53] SQ17 has two parts.

Lastly, *political partisanship* is a measure of the strength of an individual's partisan, political leanings. Two questions, SQ9 and SQ10, ask respondents to identify any partisan leaning they might have, as well as qualify the strength of said leaning. SQ9 is coded with a one (1.00) if any one of the three partisan labels listed is selected, or for any legitimate[54] party indicated by the "other" option. The "independent" label is coded with a zero (0.00), as it represents no allegiance to a party, and therefore cannot be considered a partisan political leaning. SQ10 is coded using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from zero (0.00) for "weak" partisan association to (1.00) for "very strong" partisan association.

Recruitment

   Recruitment is the second element of interest within the CVM of Verba et al. and represents an individual's contact with active recruitment networks—an individual's contact with other individuals who have asked them to participate in civic or political activities. As Verba et al. contend, recruitment is a key factor in predicting individuals' participation in both political and non-political, voluntary activity. The 57-part SQ6 is used to measure respondents' previous contact with active recruitment networks. This question asks respondents to identify whether or not they have ever been asked to take part in any of a series of 19 activities, by way of contact with any of the following groups: other library users, library staff, or someone outside of the library[55].

   Each part of SQ6 is coded with a one (1.00) or zero (0.00). An aggregate score is derived for each one of the three contact categories, as well as for the entirety of SQ6. Scores for the two

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[54] *Legitimate* here means an officially recognized party, such as the Democratic, Republican, Tea, Green, or Socialist Party USA, which produces literature for voter consumption.
[55] i.e., someone in their personal or professional lives.

Table 3.3

Name	Definition
Civic Engagement	The degree to which an individual participates in activities of a civic or political nature
Political Participation	The degree to which an individual participates in activities of a political nature
Civic Participation	The degree to which an individual participates in activities of a civic nature
Library Usage	A product of how often an individual visits the public library and utilizes those facilities, services, and collections made available for public use
Library Visitation	How often an individual physically visits the library facility
Library Utilization	The degree of information resource, service, and civic space utilization by an individual
Resource and Service Utilization	The degree of library-based information resource and services utilization by an individual
Civic Space Utilization	The degree of library-based civic space utilization by an individual
Civic Resources Utilizations	The degree of library-based civic resources utilization by an individual; civic resources include: information about political candidates, information about political issues, information about local events, information about government programs, IRS tax forms, and voter registration forms.
Civic Service Utilization	The degree of library-based civic service utilization by an individual; civic services include: attending a library program or event, attending a meeting of a club or social group, attending a meeting to address community issues, and any other occasion where decisions are made in a group setting within the library.
Social Interaction	The amount of conversation-based social interaction between an individual, library staff, and other library users
Recruitment	The degree to which an individual has come into contact with active recruitment networks, as expressed by having been asked to participate in a range of civic and political activities
Library Recruitment	The degree of recruitment an individual experiences while inside of the library
Outside Recruitment	The degree of recruitment an individual experiences while outside of the library

Table header spanning columns: **Variables: Library User Survey**

Political Engagement	The degree to which an individual has interest in participating in political activities, such as voting, attending a meeting, or writing a politician
Political Interest	The level of personal interest an individual expresses with regard to matters of a political nature
Political Information	An individual's general knowledge of US politics or political systems
Political Efficacy	The degree to which an individual believes they can affect public policy decisions via participation in the political process
Political Partisanship	The degree to which an individual identifies with a specific political party
Resources	The degree to which an individual possesses those civic skills, education, or income-based resources necessary to readily participate in activities of a civic or political nature
Civic Skills	The degree to which an individual possesses those technical skills most readily associated with active civic participation
Educational Attainment	An individual's educational attainment, as expressed by degree or certificate-based scholastic achievement
Income	An individual's household income
Gender	The gender of an individual
Age	The age of an individual

library-related contact groups together produce the independent sub-variable *library recruitment*. The aggregate score derived for the non-library contact category becomes the sub-variable *outside recruitment*.

Resources

Resources are the third and, according to Verba et al., most critical of the CVM elements. As they note, *resources* are an important factor within both the SES and rational choice models of civic engagement. Further in their investigation, they are able to show how understanding the connection between *resources* and civic voluntarism (i.e., *civic engagement*) helps to explain the underlying causality of *civic engagement* more accurately than either the SES or rational choice models.

In this study, the *resources* variable is operationalized as the complex measure of a respondent's educational attainment (*education*), household income (*income*), and civic skill attainment (*civic skills*). *Education* and *income* are both self-explanatory. However, the *civic skills* variable is a bit more complex and acts as a measure of a respondent's likely civic skill level, as expressed through their participation in public speaking, group decision making, and organizational leadership activities.

The *education* variable establishes a respondent's level of access to those resources most closely associated with educational attainment, as related to formal scholastic achievement. This variable is calculated using the respondent's answer to SQ47, which asks the respondent to identify the educational category (from a list of eight possible choices), that best describes their educational background. This variable is coded using an evenly weighted scoring system ranging from 0.125 to 1.00. For example, those who have only "some high school," which represents the lowest end of the scoring scale, are given an educational attainment score (EAS) of 0.125 (1/8).

Those who indicate having a "graduate degree," which represents the highest side of the scoring scale, are given an EAS of 1.00 (8/8).

The *income* variable measures a respondent's level of access to monetary resources vis-à-vis household income. This variable is calculated using the respondent's answer to SQ48, which asks them to select one of seven income categories that best describes their household income. This variable is coded is a manner similar to educational attainment, with the lowest end of the scale, "Less than $20k per year," scored 0.143 (1/7), and the highest end score 1.00 (7/7).

The *civic skills* variable is a measure of a respondent's likely civic skill level, as expressed through their participation in public speaking, group decision making, and organizational leadership. This variable is further divided into *outside civic skills* and *library civic skills*. The *outside civic skills* variable is coded using an additive LFS derived from responses to SQ35, SQ36, SQ38, SQ40, and SQ42. The *library civic skills* variable is coded using an additive LFS derived from responses to SQ37, SQ39, SQ41, and SQ43. The LFS for both of these measures are then summed to produce the *civic skills* variable.

Demographic and Control Variables

Basic demographic variables are used for descriptive analytical purposes, as well as to control for factors that might lead to spurious findings when testing SES models. These self-explanatory variables speak to the age, gender, race, and familial status of respondents. *Male* is a dummy variable that is used to denote the sex of a respondent and is collected via SQ44. A score of one (1.00) denotes a male respondent, while zero (0.00) denotes a female. *African American* is a dummy variable used to identify the race of the respondent and is collected via SQ45. A score of one (1.00) denotes an African American respondent, while zero (0.00) denotes a respondent of

a different race[56]. *Age* is a scale variable that corresponds to the self-reported age of each

respondent and is collected via SQ46. Lastly, *children at home* is a scale variable that

corresponds to the self-reported number of children under the age of 18 living in a respondent's

home. This variable is collected via SQ49.

Addressing Multicollinearity and Endogeneity

Multicollinearity and endogeneity are two phenomena that have an adverse effect on

regression coefficients, often rendering false multivariate analysis findings. The problem with

multicollinearity lies in the parallel correlation of several independent variables with each other

and potentially the dependent variable being modeled. This can cause coefficients to register

false negative relationships with the dependent variable, even when there is in fact a positive

relationship. Multicollinearity can also cause r-squared values, as well as independent variable

coefficients, to register as much lower, or less significant, than is indeed the case.

Multicollinearity is an important issue to address with this research for two reasons. First,

data gathered at *Site A* shows a high level of correlation between several independent variables

and the dependent variable. Second, the use of several complex, multi-facet variables leads to

significant correlations across several related independent variables. Moreover, both of these

issues can be identified by those tell-tale signs of multicollinearity just mentioned. For this

reason, two methodological alterations are made to adjust for these impediments. First, *Site A*

data is modeled in two different ways to adjust for multicollinearity—this will be explained in

greater detail in Chapter 5. Second, those complex multi-facet variables used in this study are

combined, and therefore reduced, into single variable indices. These measures will be explained

in greater detail in the next section.

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[56] All but one of the non-African American respondents is Caucasian (across all three samples). The remaining respondent is of Latino descent and represent less than 1% of the entire pool of respondents.

With regard to endogeneity, the problem is one of the dependent variable in a model affecting the independent variable(s) used to predict its values. As with multicollinearity, this can cause spurious significance output within a regression model. This is a phenomenon that Verba et al. note as a concern in their own research. In particular, they note that it is plausible that an individual's civic engagement leads to higher levels of civic skills, rather than those civic skills leading to civic engagement. Of course, a third possibility is that a cycle of some sort exists where civic skills lead to civic engagement, which leads back into civic skills. In either case, this is a phenomenon that must be controlled to ensure valid regression model output.

Verba et al. use two-stage least squares regression to control for endogenous relationships in their own research. This is a method used in the field of econometrics and consists of a two-stage regression procedure that utilizes *instrumental variables* to help estimate the true causal value of the endogenous independent variable in question. This is possible because the instrumental variable correlates with the independent variable, but not with the dependent variable. In a sense, through the two-stage least squares procedure, the instrumental variables will help the model account only for correlation between the independent and dependent variable that is not the result of endogenous influence, since the instrumental variable does not correlate with the error term of the model.

Index Measures

Several measurement indices are used in this study to control for multicollinearity among those variables that comprise larger variable categories. The first category is comprised of those variables that measure the effect of libraries on an individual's CVM elements. This includes: *library engagement*, *library recruitment*, and *library civic skills*. To prevent multicollinearity

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between these measures and their non-library counterparts[57], these three library-related variables are added together to create a *library effect* variable. The second group of variables that require an index measure consists of those four variables that comprise the overall measure of a respondent's *political engagement*: *political information*, *political efficacy*, *political partisanship*, and *political interest*. Once again these measures are simply added together to create the index measure of *political engagement*.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides details of the methodological approaches used in this dissertation. The reasons for a two-phase approach to studying the phenomenon of civic engagement among library users are explained in detail. This chapter outlines those methods used in conducting an organizational analysis of public libraries in Alabama, which constitutes the first phase of this research and helps to define a *range of library civicness* that is based on a library's provision of those services that have the potential to impart civic skills and provide opportunities to connect with active recruiting networks. The *range of library civicness* exposed in this preliminary phase signals important variations that exists across the entire population of Alabama public libraries. This chapter goes onto discusses the ways in which this information is used to design and administer the second phase of study, which tests a theory of library-augmented civic engagement. Lastly, the survey-based methodological approach used in the second phase of study is described in detail in this chapter.

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[57] i.e., *political engagement*, *outside recruitment*, and *outside civic skills*

Chapter 4 – Organizational Analysis Findings

This chapter will share findings from this study's organizational analysis of public libraries. This analysis was carried out to investigate, first, the manner in which public libraries are a reflection of the communities they serve, and therefore differ from one community to the next. Second, this analysis speaks to the manner in which such differences extend to the level of support each library provides to those service elements that potentially impact civic engagement. Special attention is given in this analysis to the public library's theoretical support of civic engagement as outlined in the previous literature, as well as in relation to this dissertation's LACE theory.

Observational and anecdotal evidence supports the claim that important organizational variations exist across public libraries. Public libraries exist at differing levels of the politico-administrative hierarchy, and can be administered via several types of governance structures. In addition, variations can be seen in: revenue streams, service populations, and guiding missions. Moreover, the unique *local identity* of each library likely has a profound effect on libraries' facilities, collections, services, and policies—which have the potential to affect the civicness of each library.

The analyses carried out in this chapter are designed to speak to two of this study's hypotheses:

H_1: Public libraries are a reflection of the communities they support, and therefore vary across communities. Their offerings are directly affected by available monetary resources, which are directly affected by the overall socio-economic condition of the community itself.

H$_2$: Due to various factors, most notably the socioeconomic condition of the communities they serve, the "civicness" of public libraries, as defined by their provision of those services that are theoretically linked to increased levels of civic engagement among individuals, differs across communities.

In pursuing these ends, univariate analysis will be used to explore central tendency and dispersion among key library indicators that will help to establish the variability believed to exist across libraries. Bivariate analysis by way of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is then used to explore any correlations that exist among these indicators and further flesh out the connections between those variations uncovered by univariate analysis. It is important to understand that, while this analysis cannot speak to causality, it does introduce important contextual elements that undoubtedly influence any causal relationships that may exist between public libraries and civic engagement.

Univariate Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 78 Alabama public libraries are analyzed in this portion of the study (N=78). These libraries span 45 of Alabama's 67 counties, and serve a population of 2,968,700 (62% of Alabama's 2010 population). The average service population in this sample is 38,060, with the smallest library serving a population of only 707 and the largest serving a population of 359,279. However, before moving on from here, it is important to note the high standard deviations in this case, and those that are seen across the entire set of variables discussed in this section. For example, in the case of *service population*, there is a standard deviation of 65,462 people. This is almost double the mean, and is the product of several outliers (see Figure 3.1). Figure 4.1 shows the irregular dispersion of values related to this variable, as is exemplary of several other variables explored in this analysis. For this reason, medians are used

in several instances as the more accurate measure of data centrality. That being said, the median

service population of this sample is 17,085.

Figure 4.1
Distribution of Service Population Size
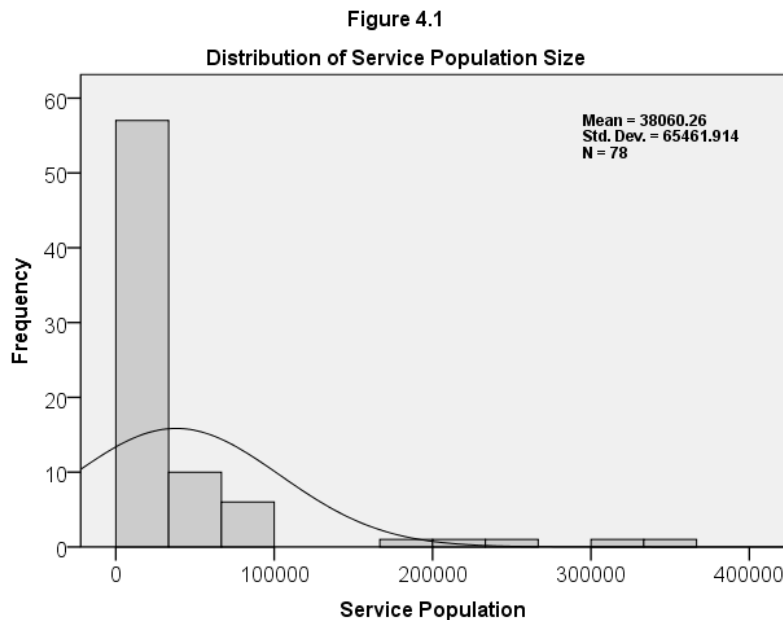
In 2010[58], the 78 libraries in the target population[59] received $73.8 million in total

revenue, with median revenue at $333,944. The lowest revenue reported for the sample is

$48,928 and the highest is $17,486,076. On average, 85% of revenue comes via local sources,

4% by state sources, and 1% by federal sources. An additional 10% comes from other sources,

such as grants and private donations.

Libraries in this population expended over $84 million (median expenditures stand at

$320,739) in 2010. Seventy-two ($72) million (86%) was expended toward operating costs,

which includes: over $8 million (12%) on collections, nearly $50 million (69%) on staffing, and

nearly $14 million (19%) on other operating costs. Another $12 million (14%) comprised these

libraries' capital expenditures. Overall, these expenditures help to maintain and support library

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[58] All operational and usage statistics used in this portion of the study come from survey data gathered by the IMLS in 2010.
[59] i.e., public libraries in the state of Alabama

operations, as well as collections totaling 6.3 million volumes of printed materials; 8,792 current

print serial titles; 386,057 physical[60] video objects; and 329,453 physical audio objects. Each

library, on average, provides access to 72 subscription-based, electronic databases[61] via 3,328

public use computer terminals[62].

The libraries examined here were physically visited nearly 13 million times in 2010, and

the materials that comprise their collections circulated among users nearly 16 million times, with

30% of this number representing children's materials. These libraries offered close to 26,000

library programs that were attended by over 762,000 users. During that same time, over 3.3

million reference questions were answered. To support public service efforts, these libraries

employ a total of 1,275 staff, with 14 libraries employing a staff of only three (3) and, on the

other end of the spectrum, one library employing a staff of 247[63].

As determined by a content analysis of library websites, there is a wide spectrum of

library offerings and support for library programming and organizational meetings. With regard

to programming, 100% of sampled libraries offer children's programming, 92% offer youth

programming, and 81% offer adult programming. In addition, 90% offer educational

programming, 44% offer arts programming, 37% offer cultural programming, and 27% offer

civic programming[64].

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[60] *Physical* in the sense that the media-platform of the object is physical and not digital
[61] Scholarly databases provide access to millions of citations and full-text articles.
[62] This is an average of 32 computer terminals per library.
[63] Birmingham Public Library
[64] Please refer back to Table 3.2 for clarification on these programming types.

Table 4.2

Alabama Public Libraries
Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Sample Size (n)			78			
Counties Represented			45			
Service Population	707	359,279	2,968,700	38,060	17,085	65,462
Total Revenue	$48,928	$17,486,076	$73,832,953	$946,576	$333,944	$2,351,578
Local Revenue	$26,664	$16,575,620	$63,143,946	$809,538	$277,691	$2,154,130
State Revenue	$631	$320,552	$2,484,221	$31,849	$12,211	$57,218
Federal Revenue	$0	$118,220	$828,768	$10,625	$3,872	$18,843
Other Revenue	$0	$1,290,518	$7,376,018	$94,564	$21,861	$213,587
Capital Revenue	$0	$1,000,000	$2,408,205	$30,874	$0	$127,953
Total Expenditures	$43,008	$17,478,009	$84,246,073	$1,080,078	$320,739	$2,622,374
Capital Expenditures	$0	$10,140,020	$12,417,152	$159,194	$0	$1,151,597
Operating Expenditures	$43,008	$17,478,009	$71,828,921	$920,884	$320,739	$2,324,709
Collection Expenditures	$4,367	$1,371,921	$8,411,751	$107,843	$34,208	$245,002
Staff Expenditures	$0	$13,624,121	$49,487,673	$634,457	$213,211	$1,727,183
Other Operating Expenditures	$0	$2,481,967	$13,685,791	$175,459	$59,812	$395,416
Print Materials	8,203	730,668	6,287,462	80,608	50,674	126,532
Serials	0	1,402	8,792	113	52	232
Databases	68	122	5,615	72	69	9
Computer Terminals	5	417	3,328	43	18	74
Visits	9,615	2,460,796	12,882,803	165,164	57,812	346,394
Circulation	6,361	1,979,929	15,856,635	203,290	84,695	364,083
Programs	4	3,261	25,863	332	179	568
Program Attendance	150	119,238	762,049	9,770	4,551	18,548
Reference Transactions	275	692,224	3,394,679	43,522	8,246	108,822
Total Staff	2	247	1,275	16	7	34

To a lesser degree than programming, libraries sampled for this study also provide opportunities for users to participate in formal meetings of several types. Meeting room rental services are not required for meetings to occur, but 41% of the libraries do offer this service. In addition, over 37% of these libraries host library-related civic meetings, as well as the meetings of social clubs. Another 6% of these libraries host non-library organizational meetings, 5% host non-library civic meetings, and 3% host political meetings[65]. Full details of these findings can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Programs and Meetings			
Programs		*Meetings*	
Type	Occurrence	Type	Occurrence
Children's Programming	100%	Room Rental	41%
Youth Programming	92%	Library Civic Meeting	41%
Adult Programming	81%	Social Meeting	37%
Educational Programming	90%	Non-Library Org. Meeting	8%
Arts Programming	47%	Non-Library Civic Meeting	6%
Cultural Programming	37%	Political Meeting	4%
Civic Programming	27%		

Taken together, these univariate analyses illustrate beyond a shadow of doubt that indeed variation does exist across public libraries. Moreover, these variations are tied to key organizational measures linked to traditional library services. In addition, it is clear that the civicness of libraries, vis-à-vis those service offerings that are theoretically linked with higher levels of civic engagement among individuals, also varies. Together, these findings partially affirm H_1 and H_2. Full affirmation of these hypotheses is not possible without additional bivariate analysis.

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[65] Please refer back to Table 3.2 for clarification on these meeting types.

Inferential Statistics

In combining 2010 IMLS and US census data with additional data gathered through this study's website content analysis, one gleans a more complete understanding of those variations that exist across the library population. As one would expect, a library's *total revenue* is highly correlative with the size of that library's *service population* (see Table 4.4). This makes sense, considering that (a) public libraries are tax-supported agencies, and (b) tax revenue is highly influenced by the size of the tax base, which in this case is defined by the *service population*. In addition, conventional wisdom would suggest that the higher a library's *total revenue*, and the

Table 4.4

Population, Revenue, Income, & Education					
Pearson Correlation					
n=78	Service Population	Total Revenue	Total Revenue (per capita)	Income (per capita)	Educational Attainment
Service Population	1	.796**	-.120	.004	.125
Total Revenue	.796**	1	.158	.058	.171
Total Revenue (per capita)	-.120	.158	1	.318**	.231*
Income (per capita)	.004	.058	.318**	1	.729**
Educational Attainment	.125	.171	.231*	.729**	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

larger its *service population*, the larger its collections, the wider is service offerings, and the higher overall community usage of said collections and services. Findings seen in Table 4.5, which show significant correlation between *total revenue* and several important collection and usage indicators, are consistent with this reasoning.

While these analyses cannot speak to causal relationships among these variables, a few reasonable inferences are supported. For example, it makes perfect sense that the overall size of a community influences the total amount of tax revenue available to the local library. It also makes

sense that the size of a library's service population will directly affect the amount of overall library usage experienced by that library. In fact, these findings almost make too much sense to be interesting—because in both cases one is comparing two variables that represent the same, single factor. That is to say, here *total revenue* and overall, community-based *library usage* are proxies for *service population*. Additionally, collection indicators stand as proxy for *total revenue*. To delve into this issue a bit deeper, it helps to consider the unit and level of analysis here.

When considering library usage within the context of those data provide via the IMLS, one must remember that the unit of analysis is the library. Moreover, libraries serve entire populations; each library user, for example, does not visit or borrow materials from their own personal library. So an analysis of usage in this instance should exist at the population, not the individual, level. Further, this should influence how one defines collection size, service offerings, as well as their usage by community members.

Since the size of a community's population will inherently create imbalance when attempting to compare certain measures to other communities with varying populations, one must control for the size of the community or, in this case, the *service population*[66]. This is done by creating a *per capita* measure, which means dividing overall, individual-level data by the *service population* across the entire sample. Otherwise, one is simply comparing the relative sizes of different populations, which is not the point of such an exercise. For this reason, per capita measures of each of the collection and usage variables are created to support apples-to-apples, cross-population comparisons.

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[66] It is for this same reason that researchers use crime rates (per capita measures of crime) to compare crime across populations.

Although collections are an important aspect of libraries, many would agree that the quality of a collection is just as important, if not more so, than its size. However, the purpose of this analysis is not to debate the value of different types of collections. Instead, this analysis is interested in determining whether significant variance exists across public libraries, with special attention paid to those activities which have the potential to affect users' civic engagement. So, having arrived at a basic understanding of how collection size differs across libraries, variables related to collections are omitted from further analyses.

Table 4.5

Collections, Usage, & Revenue	
Pearson Correlation	
n=78	Total Revenue
Print Materials	.922**
Serial Materials	.844**
Video Materials	.868**
Audio Materials	.793**
Databases	.553**
Circulation	.853**
Visits	.987**
Program Attendance	.829**
Reference Transactions	.922**
Computer Users	.973**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Utilizing per capita usage measures, bivariate analysis shows no significant correlations against *total revenue*, confirming *total revenue* as a proxy of *service population* (see Table 4.6). Moreover, while a larger *service population* equates to higher *total revenue*, which often results in deeper library collection and service offerings, this has nothing to do with the comparative rate at which the *service population* uses its library. However, when analyzed against *total revenue (per capita)*, one sees significant correlations across all per capita usage variables. In addition,

findings shown in Table 4.4 indicate significant correlation between *income (per capita)* and *total revenue*, as well as between *income (per capita)* and *educational attainment*. Here, it can be inferred that the ratio of *total revenue* to *service population* is affected by the overall wealth of that *service population*, which is highly influenced by the educational attainment of that community. Of course, educational attainment often means a higher paying job.

Table 4.6

Revenue to Usage Rate

Pearson Correlation

n=78	Total Revenue	Total Revenue (per capita)	Income (per capita)	Educational Attainment
Circulation (per capita)	-.016	.633**	.296**	.325**
Visits (per capita)	.088	.681**	.306**	.287*
Program Attendance (per capita)	-.046	.795**	.206	.102
Reference Transactions (per capita)	.153	.408**	.535**	.503**
Computer Users (per capita)	.028	.624**	.111	-.077

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of the civic array scores across the target population. These scores display a relatively normal distribution with a mean of 6.09 and a standard deviation of 2.59. This indicates that: (a) there are indeed variations among public libraries related to their theoretical support of civic engagement among library users, and (b) a majority of sampled libraries fall into the midrange of civicness and exhibit close to six[67] organizational elements, outside of mere book lending and information access, that should, according to the relevant literature, promote civic engagement among library users.

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[67] i.e. six out of 13, or roughly 44% of, potential elements

Figure 4.7
Distribution of Civic Array Scores
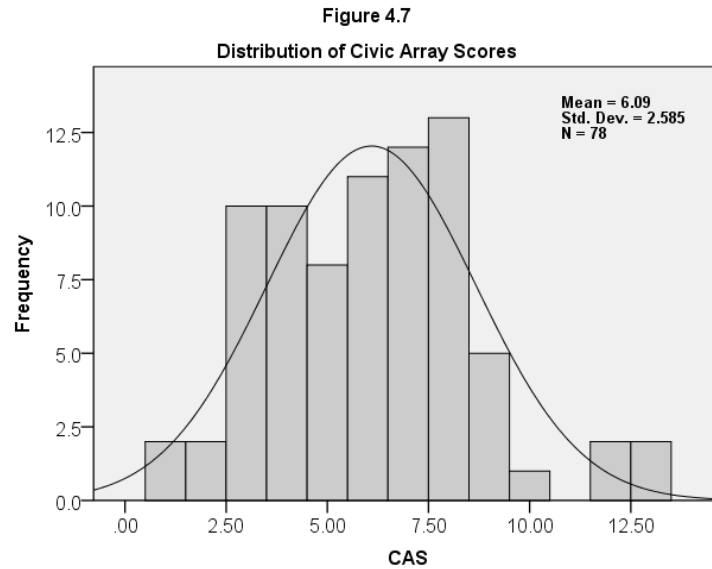
Additional bivariate analyses indicate that *total revenue* significantly correlates with the overall CAS of a library, most notably by way of that library's programming (see Table 4.8). *Total revenue (per capita)* shows only a significant correlation with *educational attainment*, while *income (per capita)*, a significant correlate of *total revenue (per capita)* and *educational attainment*, also shows significant correlation with both programming and a library's overall CAS. Interestingly, *educational attainment* significantly correlates with all three measures of library civicness, as well as *income (per capita)*. This finding could indicate that library civicness is a direct result of requirements expressed by the *service population*.

Table 4.8

The Civic Array Score				
Pearson Correlation				
n=78	Total Revenue	Total Revenue (per capita)	Income (per capita)	Educational Attainment
CAS	.257*	.105	.298**	.465**
Meeting Score	.162	.100	.222	.402**
Programming Score	.273*	.093	.256*	.393**
Income (per capita)	.058	.318**	1.000	.729**
Educational Attainment	.171	.231*	.729**	1.000

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Taken as a whole, the findings outlined in this section are able to support the full affirmation of H_1 and H_2. Moreover, these analyses have shown that several key organizational measures associated with any particular library are highly correlated with the socioeconomic disposition of that library's *service population*. Further, this connection seems to carry over to the civicness of that library, as defined here.

Summation of Organizational Analysis Findings

Even though bivariate analysis alone cannot expose causal links between variables, significant correlations can partially confirm or refute the understandings provided by observational or anecdotal evidence. For example, in the case of public libraries, those analyses shared here do provide support for a plausible narrative. Specifically, one might posit that the larger a city, the more tax revenue that can be raised in support of their public libraries. In turn, the more revenue available for purchases, the deeper a library's collection and service offerings. The size of the *service population* also affects total usage of those resources; the larger a library's *service population*, the higher overall, individual-level usage.

However, the deeper collection and service offerings of the public library serving a large city do not ensure high rates of usage at the population level of analysis. In fact, higher population-level usage is seen in areas where *total revenue (per capita)*, or the ratio of *total revenue* to *service population*, is higher. Moreover, one sees where *total revenue (per capita)* is higher so too is *income (per capita)* and *educational attainment*. With regard to where a library falls on the scale of civicness, as expressed by its CAS, one can see that in communities where *educational attainment* is higher, so too is the civicness of the local library.

Taken as a whole, these findings show, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that public libraries vary as much across communities as the communities themselves. In this way, empirical evidence exists to support the assertion of those library scholars who have claimed public libraries are indeed reflections of the communities that create them. Moreover, these variations should be taken into account when studying those effects libraries have on the civic engagement levels of their users. For this reason it makes sense to select several libraries along the range of civicness, as represented by their CAS, for further study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined findings from this study's organizational analysis of public libraries. These findings illustrate some important ways in which public libraries vary across communities. Univariate analyses helps to detail the ways in which library revenue, collections, and usage vary across communities. Of particular interest to theory proposed by this study, analyses illustrate that there exists a range of civicness with regard to public library support for civic engagement. These findings partially affirm both H_1 and H_2.

Bivariate analyses flesh out the relationships that exist among several important variables within this phase of study. While these findings cannot speak to the causal direction of such relationships, they do provide a better understanding of what factors may have influence over library organizations and their potential for buttressing civic engagement among library users. In particular, findings detailed in this chapter show that while a library's revenue levels correlate with collection and service support, educational attainment of the user population displays the highest level of significant correlation with library civicness. These secondary findings illustrate the manner in which libraries are a reflection of the communities they serve, how these agencies

vary as their service populations vary, and how the civicness of a library is indeed variable in a

similar manner. These findings fully affirm H_1 and H_2.

Chapter 5 - Library User Survey Findings

This chapter will discuss findings from the second phase of this study, which utilizes a user survey conducted at three different public library sites. This phase investigates the LACE theory, introduced at the end of Chapter 2, by shifting the level of analysis from the population to the individual. As mentioned in Chapter 3, civic engagement occurs at the individual level; therefore, any causal relationships are best explored at that level of analysis.

For this portion of the study three library user populations are targeted for data collection. These populations each receive their library service at a different library site. *Site A* is positioned on the lowest end of range of civicness discussed in Chapter 4, *Site B* near the middle, and *Site C* on the highest end of the range. Data collected from these sites are analyzed using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis to test the following hypotheses:

H$_3$: Through their provision of information, services, and facilities, public libraries

augment the required elements of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* outlined in the

CVM described by Verba et al.

H$_4$: The level of a library's influence on users' civic engagement is dependent upon said

library's level of CVM element augmentation (the civicness of said library).

By conducting three separate studies, this research can: (a) help to further validate some of the inferences made during the organizational analysis discussed in Chapter 4, (b) more directly speak to the effects of those elements of civicness uncovered in Chapter 4, and (c) control for variable library civicness when testing hypotheses at the individual level of analysis.

Library Sites of Interest

Site A could be described as a small community library. With a CAS of one (1.0), *Site A* is positioned on the lowest end of the range of library civicness (RLC). Its staff of three serves a

population[68] of 22,915 people, who comprise the total populations of two small towns in a rural county. *Site A* received almost $49,000 in total revenue in 2010. This amounts to approximately $3 per person across the service population. Further details are provided in Table 5.1.

Site B might be described as a medium-sized county library. With a CAS of seven (7.0), it falls near the middle of the RLC. *Site B* serves a population[69] of just over 50,000 people, who comprise the total population of a suburban, commuter county. *Site B* received nearly $564,000 in revenue in 2010. This amounts to approximately $11 per person across the service population. Further details are provided in Table 5.1.

Site C is best described as a medium-sized metro library. Registering a CAS of 13.0, it is positioned on the highest end of the RLC. *Site C* serves a population[70] of 31,353 people, who comprise a densely populated area approximately four miles from the center of a large metropolitan area. However, it should be understood that *Site C* is not a part of the metro library system, and instead serves this one metro-suburban community. It received close to $2.1 million in revenue in 2010, which amounts to approximately $66 per person across the service population. Further details are provided in Table 5.1.

User Populations of Interest

Population A has median age of 38 years-old, and is 54% male. The racial makeup of the population is: 76% White, 22% African American, and 2% comprised of persons who identify as a Latino of single or mixed-race. Only 10% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher educational attainment. The population's per capita income is $18,462.

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[68] *Population A*
[69] *Population B*
[70] *Population C*

Table 5.1

Target Library Characteristics			
	Site A	Site B	Site C
CAS	1	7	13
Service Population	18,185	50,364	31,353
Total Revenue (per capita)	$3	$11	$66
Total Revenue	$48,928	$563,711	$2,083,862
Local Revenue	$26,664	$450,000	$1,984,233
State Revenue	$16,024	$46,452	$14,889
Federal Revenue	$0	$19,250	$60,000
Other Revenue	$6,240	$48,009	$24,740
Capital Revenue	$0	$58,409	$41,519
Print Materials	27,751	81,508	72,342
Video Materials	2,164	1,935	15,604
Audio Materials	1,142	1,990	7,353
Serial Materials	25	72	238
Databases	68	70	72
Computer Terminals	9	43	127
Visits	38,000	215,025	515,359
Circulation	6,293	202,610	580,027
Programs	4	536	391
Program Attendance	150	15,766	17,803
Reference Transactions	4,500	58,575	101,920
Library Staff	3	19	33

Population B has a median age of 36, and is 49% male. The racial makeup is: 79% White, 18% African American, 1% Asian, and 2% Latino. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher educational attainment. The population's per capita income is $25,035.

Population C has a median age of 36, and is 49% male. The racial makeup is: 74% White, 17% African American, 2% Asian, and 7% Latino. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher educational attainment. The population's per capita income is $30,601. Further details of all three populations can be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

	Population A	Population B	Population C
Service Population Characteristics			
Population Size	18,185	50,364	31,353
Average Household Size	3	3	2
Home Owners	76%	78%	55%
Bachelor's degree or higher	10%	22%	59%
Employed	52%	59%	65%
Per capita income (dollars)	$18,462	$25,035	$30,601
Median Monthly Home Owner Cost	$1,040	$1,238	$1,808
Median Rent	$558	$832	$874
Male	54%	49%	47%
Median age (years)	38	36	30
65 years and over	11%	9%	9%
White	77%	79%	74%
Black or African American	22%	18%	17%
Asian	0%	1%	2%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2%	2%	7%

Sample Characteristics

Sample A represents a cross-section of 36 library user respondents from *Population A*, who receive library services at *Site A*. *Sample B* and *Sample C* follow suite with their size and respective correspondence to *Populations* and *Sites B* and *C*. While *Sample A* shows a relatively even dispersion of White and African American respondents, *Sample B* and *Sample C* skew more toward Whites. However, the racial dispersion of neither *Sample B* nor *Sample C* exceeds the racial dispersion seen in the general population.

The median age of survey respondents varies up to 12 years across the three samples, with respondents in *Sample A* registering a median age of 36, an age of 48 in *Sample B*, and an age of 43 in *Sample C*. The average educational attainment, as represented by the percentage of respondents with a bachelor's or higher degree, increases as one moves across the Samples from A to C. As one would expect household income tracks closely with educational attainment.

Table 5.3

Sample Demographics			
	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
n	36	36	36
Male	36%	28%	44%
White	50%	66%	78%
Black	47%	31%	22%
Hispanic	3%	0%	0%
Asian	0%	3%	0%
Median Age	36	48	43
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	22%	53%	92%
Household Income Range	$21-40k	$41-60k	$61-80k
Avg. Children Under 18	1	1	1

Library Activities

Library usage is operationalized in this study as the product of *library visitation* and *library utilization*. With regard to their rate of visitation, a vast majority of respondents in each of the three samples taken by this study indicated visiting their local public library "often," as indicated in Table 5.4. *Library utilization* is a composite of measure of *library resource and service utilization* and *library civic space utilization*.

Table 5.4

Library Visitation (Often)			
n= 36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
	64%	64%	75%

Table 5.5 shows the total percentage of respondents that indicate some usage of library materials, services, or facilities. Importantly, *civic service utilization* falls in line with the findings of this study's organizational analysis. Considering the CAS of each site, one should expect usage in this category to increase from *Sample A* to *Sample C*. Interestingly, *civic resource utilization*, which could not be measured by the organizational analysis, also matches

this pattern. This both verifies and strengthens the findings from this study's organizational

analysis, which are outlined in Chapter 4.

It is worth noting that the data shown in Table 5.5 shows that social interaction across the

three samples reveals the opposite pattern of civic resource and service utilization. This cannot

be easily explained without further study, but it could be the result of the size of the populations

from which each sample is taken. For example, the service populations associated with each

sample increases from *Sample A* to *Sample C*. Perhaps the pattern seen here is the result of

variations in hospitality—the average community member's treatment of persons they do not

know personally. That is to say, perhaps levels of hospitality vary inversely with population.

In addition, while the overall trend seen in the category of general *resource and service*

utilization follows the same pattern as civic resource and service utilization, variations on each

Table 5.5

Library Usage - By Activity			
n=36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Check out a book	86%	78%	89%
Check out a movie	50%	61%	81%
Access the internet	89%	69%	53%
Receive help from library staff	75%	94%	86%
Average general resource and service utilization	**75%**	**76%**	**77%**
Attend a library program or event	25%	53%	69%
Attend the meeting of a club or social group	22%	44%	44%
Take part in group decision-making	25%	19%	39%
Lead a group in decision-making	14%	17%	36%
Average civic service utilization	**22%**	**33%**	**47%**
Obtain information about:			
Political issues	36%	36%	39%
Local events	44%	58%	72%
Government programs	42%	36%	42%
Average civic resource utilization	**41%**	**44%**	**51%**
Have social interactions with:			
Other library users	97%	92%	83%
Library staff	94%	97%	89%
Average social interaction	**96%**	**94%**	**86%**

level of this usage category do not follow suit. For example, internet usage, like social interaction, displays an inverse pattern. Once again, additional research is required to fully understand these data, but this particular trend could be the result of variations in economic indicators. For example, *Sample C* has the highest average household income while *Sample A* has the lowest. Furthermore, it would make sense that more respondents in *Sample C* have home internet access than respondents in *Sample A*.

The high level of social interaction, via general conversation, indicated by respondents in all three samples supports the idea of the public library as a civic space where community members interact. Further, as Table 5.6 and Table 5.7 indicate, respondents indicate engaging in conversations that cover a wide range of topics with other library users and library staff.

Table 5.6

Nature of Library Conversations With Other Users			
n=36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Books or Movies	61%	28%	47%
Work	58%	25%	25%
Family	42%	42%	36%
Personal Issues	33%	36%	14%
Local politics or social issues	36%	28%	14%
National politics or social issues	36%	14%	17%
Average	**44%**	**29%**	**26%**

As Table 5.6 shows, respondent conversations with other library users are most frequent among *Sample A*, less frequent among *Sample B*, and lowest among *Sample C*. Further, it is interesting to note that, as indicated by Table 5.7, respondents interact with other users more so than library staff. This fact adds additional support to the idea of the public library as civic space for community interaction.

Table 5.7

Nature of Library Conversations With Library Staff

n=36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Books or Movies	55%	86%	61%
Work	42%	28%	17%
Family	39%	25%	22%
Personal Issues	22%	22%	8%
Local politics or social issues	16%	14%	6%
National politics or social issues	14%	25%	0%
Average	**31%**	**33%**	**19%**

Recruitment in Libraries

Respondents across all three samples indicate comparable levels of recruitment by library staff of around five percent (5%). Comparable levels of recruitment taking place outside of the library were also present across all three samples, averaging 25%. However, as Table 5.8 shows,

Table 5.8

Recruitment By Other Library Users

n=36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Take part in a protest	3%	0%	11%
Sign a petition	11%	8%	11%
Write a letter to local newspaper	3%	0%	8%
Vote in an election	22%	6%	8%
Join a library group	8%	8%	8%
Join a group outside the library	17%	8%	0%
Volunteer time to the library	11%	0%	8%
Volunteer time to some other organization	8%	8%	11%
Donate money to library	3%	6%	17%
Donate money to some other organization	0%	6%	14%
Contact a politician at federal level	0%	3%	11%
Contact politician at state level	0%	3%	14%
Contact politician at local level	3%	3%	11%
Contact non-elected federal official	0%	3%	6%
Contact non-elected state official	0%	3%	8%
Contact non-elected local official	3%	3%	8%
Attend a political meeting or rally	0%	6%	14%
Attend a civic meeting	8%	11%	11%
Attend a social meeting	0%	17%	11%
Average	**5%**	**5%**	**10%**

while recruitment by other library users was level across *Sample A* and *Sample B*, the levels of

this same sort of recruitment in *Sample C* are twice as high on average.

Political Engagement

As shown in Table 5.9, *political interest* does not vary a great deal across the three

samples. The largest difference is seen in relation to respondents' interest in national politics and

government. While over 50% of respondents in *Sample B* and *Sample C* indicate high interest in

this topic, less than 40% of respondents in *Sample A* are equally interested.

Table 5.9

Engagement - Political Interest				
n=36	No Interest	Little Interest	Moderate Interest	High Interest
Sample A				
Local politics or government	6%	25%	39%	31%
National politics or government	6%	22%	33%	39%
Sample B				
Local politics or government	3%	19%	42%	36%
National politics or government	3%	6%	36%	56%
Sample C				
Local politics or government	0%	22%	39%	39%
National politics or government	3%	8%	36%	53%

As Table 5.10 indicates, respondents in *Sample C* show higher overall levels of *political*

partisanship—approximately 14% more respondents indicate some level of partisanship in

Sample C. This difference most notably manifests in slightly less Republican identification, and

markedly higher levels of Democratic and Tea Party identification. With regard to strength of

partisanship, a majority of respondents indicate "moderate" to "strong" partisan identification.

Table 5.10

n=36	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong	Total
Engagement - Political Partisanship					
Sample A					75%
Republican	8%	14%	11%	6%	**39%**
Democrat	3%	17%	8%	3%	**31%**
Tea Party	0%	0%	6%	0%	**6%**
Sample B					74%
Republican	6%	19%	6%	6%	**37%**
Democrat	3%	11%	14%	6%	**34%**
Tea Party	0%	3%	0%	0%	**3%**
Sample C					90%
Republican	0%	11%	11%	8%	**30%**
Democrat	6%	17%	11%	11%	**45%**
Tea Party	3%	6%	6%	0%	**15%**
Average	**3%**	**11%**	**8%**	**4%**	80%

Table 5.11 shows respondents' perceived levels of political efficacy. *Sample B* and *Sample C* show relatively normal distributions, with most respondents feelings of political efficacy falling in the range of "little" to "some." However, *Sample A* shows an almost linear inverse distribution, with most respondents indicating feelings of little to no political efficacy.
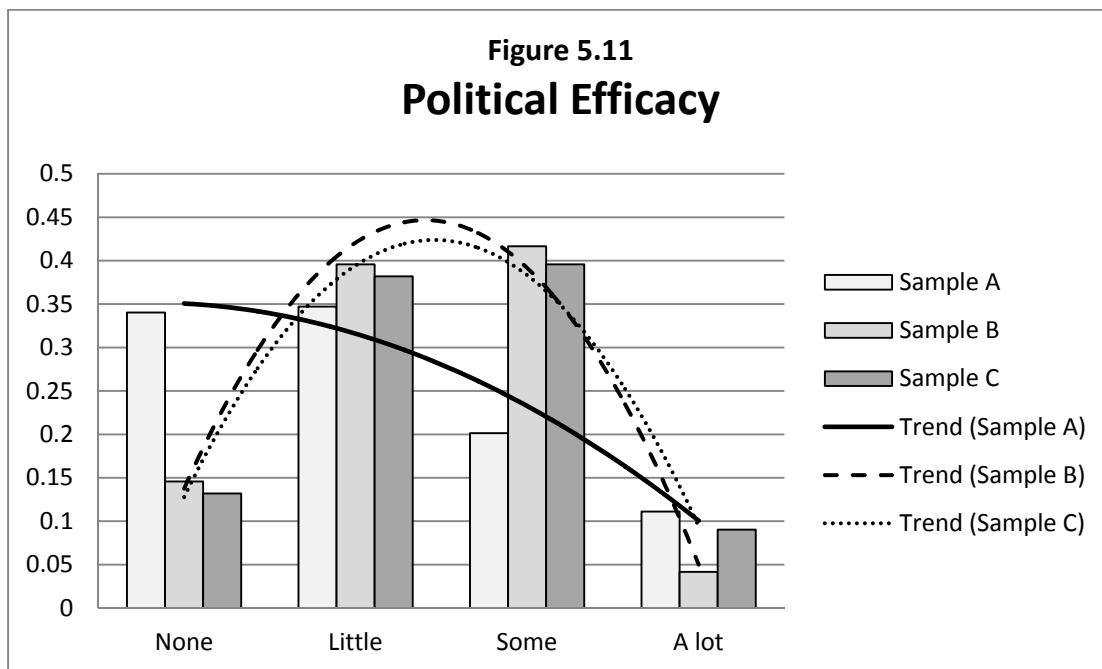

Figure 5.11
Political Efficacy

Table 5.12 provides more detail on the matter of *political efficacy*. As one can see, respondents in *Sample A* indicate the lowest levels of efficacy. This is interesting, considering the small size of *Population A*. However, this evidence indicates that even in a town where one is likely to have greater influence, as measured by an economic model of political influence[71], feelings of *political efficacy* cannot be taken for granted. Another interesting point to note is that in *Sample C* respondents feel (overall) they have higher levels of efficacy at the federal level than the local level. Once again, this finding indicates a gap between Rational Choice theories of political influence and reality.

Table 5.12

Engagement - Political Efficacy				
n=36	None	Little	Some	A lot
Sample A				
Attention from local government	22%	36%	28%	14%
Influence over local government	39%	44%	8%	8%
Attention from national government	25%	33%	31%	11%
Influence over national government	50%	25%	14%	11%
Sample B				
Attention from local government	3%	28%	67%	3%
Influence over local government	19%	50%	31%	0%
Attention from national government	8%	39%	42%	11%
Influence over national government	28%	42%	28%	3%
Sample C				
Attention from local government	11%	22%	56%	11%
Influence over local government	22%	56%	22%	0%
Attention from national government	6%	25%	53%	17%
Influence over national government	14%	50%	28%	8%

Table 5.13 shows respondents' average levels of *political information* across all three samples. Overall, scores on this section of the survey were relatively low with respondents across all three samples correctly answering the questions posed only 39% of the time. The question

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[71] Consider that under the Rational Choice model that the single person in a small community has greater political influence, by holding a larger percentage of the "political influence pie," than a single person in a large community.

that was most often answered correctly was the name of Alabama's governor. As one might have

expected each sample's average score tracked with that sample's average education attainment.

This validates the assertions of Verba et al., who contend that education, as a *resource*, affects

one's ability to evaluate and respond to their own political interests.

Table 5.13

Political Engagement (Information)			
n=36	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Answered Correctly	20%	38%	58%

Civic Engagement

     Civic engagement is a composite measure of *political participation* and *civic*

participation. As stated in Chapter 3, *political participation* is defined as active involvement

with those activities most directly related to electing public officials or influencing public policy.

Examples used in this study include: involvement with elections, political activism, and financial

support of political causes. *Civic participation*, on the other hand, is defined as involvement with

Table 5.14
Involvement with Elections
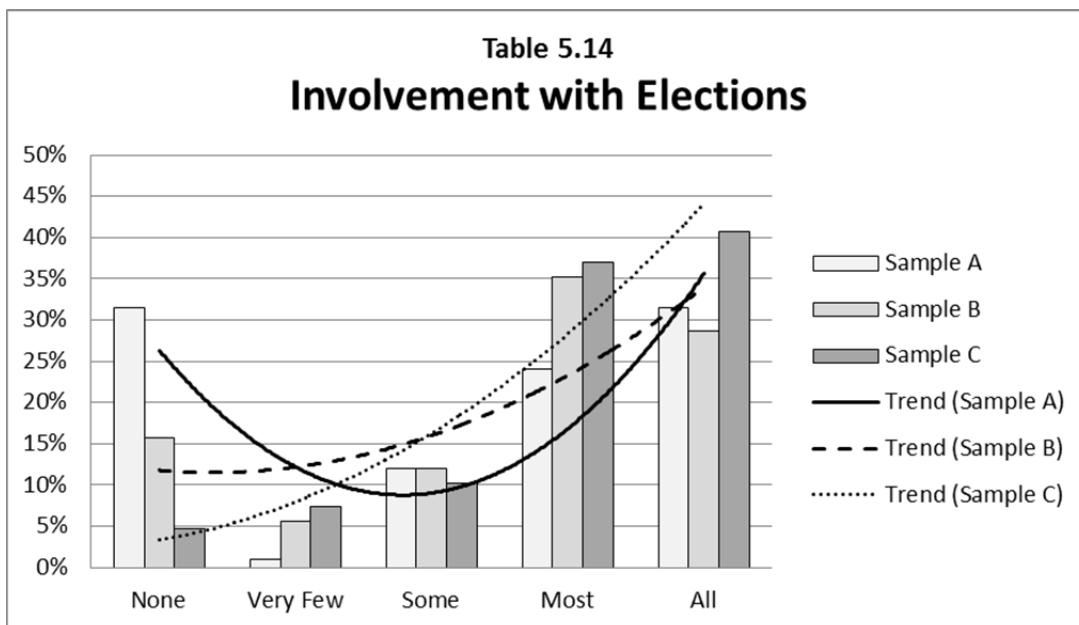
activities that are not geared at electing public officials or influencing public policy, but nonetheless indicate a moderate level of integration with one's community. In addition, activities that fall under the umbrella of *civic participation* are activities known to impart the civic skills that are normally associated with high levels of civic engagement among individuals. Table 5.14 shows levels of involvement with elections across all three sample populations. *Sample C* shows the highest levels of this type of *political participation*, while *Sample A* shows the lowest levels.

Activism is operationalized as the level of a respondent's involvement with four activities that are traditionally related to political activism: contacting elected officials, signing a petition, taking part in a protest, and attending a political rally. Table 5.15 shows the average levels of activism across all three samples. When considering overall involvement (not frequency), *Sample C* shows the highest levels and *Sample A* shows the lowest. However, it is worth noting

Table 5.15

Political Activism				
n=36	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Sample A				
Contacted an elected official	64%	14%	19%	3%
Signed a petition	56%	19%	19%	6%
Taken part in a protest	72%	14%	14%	0%
Attended a political rally	75%	8%	17%	0%
Average	**67%**	**14%**	**17%**	**2%**
Sample B				
Contacted an elected official	50%	28%	22%	0%
Signed a petition	39%	36%	19%	6%
Taken part in a protest	86%	3%	11%	0%
Attended a political rally	69%	25%	6%	0%
Average	**61%**	**23%**	**15%**	**1%**
Sample C				
Contacted an elected official	39%	36%	22%	3%
Signed a petition	19%	61%	17%	3%
Taken part in a protest	89%	0%	11%	0%
Attended a political rally	72%	25%	3%	0%
Average	**55%**	**31%**	**13%**	**1%**

that a vast majority of the difference seen between each sample is accounted for by respondents in *Sample B* and *Sample C* who indicate "rarely" engaging in activism.

Financial support is the final area of political participation studied here. As one can see in Table 5.16, financial support is fairly level between *Sample A* and *Sample B*. In addition, respondents in *Sample C*, on average, show 24% higher involvement with providing financial support to political groups or campaigns. Once again, a majority of this difference can be seen in the realm of those respondents who indicate "rarely" providing such financial support.

Civic participation is operationalized as a respondent's level of involvement with five specific activities: attending the meetings of a social/recreational group, volunteering in the local

Table 5.16

Financial Support					
n=36	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Sample A					
Membership or contribution to political group	47%	14%	31%	8%	N/A
Contribution to a political campaign	72%	11%	8%	3%	3%
Average	**60%**	**13%**	**19%**	**6%**	**3%**
Sample B					
Membership or contribution to political group	47%	25%	22%	6%	N/A
Contribution to a political campaign	72%	11%	8%	6%	0%
Average	**60%**	**18%**	**15%**	**6%**	**0%**
Sample C					
Membership or contribution to political group	22%	42%	22%	14%	N/A
Contribution to a political campaign	50%	33%	11%	6%	0%
Average	**36%**	**38%**	**17%**	**10%**	**0%**

community, attending meetings in which one takes part in decision making, writing letters to organizational officials (non-elected), and engaging in public speaking. Table 5.17 shows the varying levels of civic participation across all three samples. Once again, *Sample C* shows the highest level of overall involvement, while *Sample A* shows the lowest. In fact, as one can see, this pattern holds true across all levels of frequency indicated by respondents.

Table 5.17

Civic Participation				
n=36	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Sample A				
Volunteer in your local community	36%	25%	17%	22%
Attend meetings of a social/recreational organization	31%	17%	33%	19%
Take a leadership role within such an organization	42%	25%	19%	14%
Attend meetings in which you took part in decision making	33%	25%	22%	19%
Lead these meetings	69%	8%	8%	14%
Write letters to organizational officials	69%	14%	17%	0%
Engage in public speaking	58%	8%	19%	14%
Average	**48%**	**17%**	**19%**	**15%**
Sample B				
Volunteer in your local community	17%	17%	36%	31%
Attend meetings of a social/recreational organization	25%	22%	28%	25%
Take a leadership role within such an organization	33%	17%	28%	22%
Attend meetings in which you took part in decision making	17%	28%	36%	19%
Lead these meetings	61%	14%	17%	8%
Write letters to organizational officials	47%	25%	22%	6%
Engage in public speaking	39%	17%	22%	22%
Average	**34%**	**20%**	**27%**	**19%**
Sample C				
Volunteer in your local community	17%	28%	39%	17%
Attend meetings of a social/recreational organization	22%	39%	22%	17%
Take a leadership role within such an organization	8%	17%	44%	31%
Attend meetings in which you took part in decision making	11%	14%	42%	33%
Lead these meetings	44%	19%	25%	11%
Write letters to organizational officials	36%	33%	28%	3%
Engage in public speaking	19%	19%	42%	19%
Average	**23%**	**24%**	**35%**	**19%**

Bivariate Analysis

Findings in Chapter 4, in conjunction with the descriptive analyses above, clearly

demonstrate a *range of library civicness*. Furthermore, this range is closely tied to the

socioeconomic characteristics of each library's host community. For this reason it is best to

continue to analyze these samples separately to: (a) determine if libraries do have an effect on the

civic engagement of their users, and (b) how this support differs across the range of civicness.

The bivariate analyses that follow will examine several aspects of each library user community, as well as set the groundwork for causal models to be tested later in this chapter.

To begin, Table 5.18 shows a bivariate analysis of SES elements, four elements of library usage (as well as overall library usage), and civic engagement. While a bivariate analysis cannot

Table 5.18

Socioeconomic Status, Library Use, and Civic Engagement					
Pearson Correlation					
n=36	Library Visitation	Social Interaction	Civic Space Utilization	Resource & Service Utilization	Library Usage	Civic Engagement
Site A						
Income	-.039	.116	.140	.022	.121	.187
Education	.073	.427**	.315	.360*	.368*	.378*
Age	.089	.138	.165	.148	.180	.280
Male	-.037	-.292	-.279	-.210	-.291	-.139
African American	.132	-.226	.004	.056	.021	.016
Site B						
Income	-.039	.116	.140	.022	.121	.187
Education	.073	.427**	.315	.360*	.368*	.378*
Age	.089	.138	.165	.148	.180	.280
Male	-.037	-.292	-.279	-.210	-.291	-.139
African American	.132	-.226	.004	.056	.021	.016
Site C						
Income	-.041	-.157	-.086	-.214	-.140	.253
Education	.351*	.034	.057	.110	.081	.280
Age	-.103	.172	.297	-.022	.211	.157
Male	-.208	-.285	-.119	-.298	-.195	-.089
African American	-.065	.081	.174	.317	.242	-.126

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

indicate direction of causality, correlation would be expected between SES elements and civic engagement if indeed a causal relationship did exist. As Table 5.18 indicates, SES elements do not show only reliable correlation with both library usage and civic engagement. In fact, the only SES element that shows any correlation with library usage or civic engagement is education.

Table 5.19 shows correlations between library usage elements (as well as overall library usage) and civic engagement. As one can see, if library usage is linked to civic engagement, *civic*

space utilization is clearly the key factor. Moreover, this factor is encompasses a user's social interactions with library staff and other users, as well as their utilization of civic resources and services. These are resources and services that supplement political or civic interest and, in the case of civic services, usually incorporate a social component. Here it is worth noting that, as shown in Table 5.19, *library visitation* and non-civic *resource and service utilization* are not significantly correlated with *civic engagement* at any of the library sites.

Table 5.19

Library Use and Civic Engagement			
Pearson Correlation			
n=36	Site A	Site B	Site C
Library Visitation	.184	.184	.232
Civic Space Utilization	.499**	.499**	.428**
Resource & Service Usage	.103	.103	.227
Overall Library Usage	.437**	.437**	.396*

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Of course, it is not merely library usage that is of concern here, but rather those civic skills, recruitment contacts, and general informational supplements to civic interest that the LACE theory asserts are causal factors in the promotion of civic engagement among library users. As Table 5.20 indicates, there is a fairly even spread of correlations between these factors and those elements that comprise library usage. Furthermore, the lack of such relationships across those elements that comprise the CVM indicates that, if it can be shown to exist, library-augmented civic engagement is indeed a separate phenomenon from that which is outlined by the CVM. Otherwise one would expect to see, for example, significant correlations between recruitment and civic skill attainment both outside and inside the library environment.

Table 5.21 lends additional credence to a statement made above about library benefit elements and their CVM counterparts. Specifically, Table 5.21 shows that most often library benefits, such as recruitment, civic skills, and engagement, do not significantly correlate with

Table 5.20

Library Use and LACE Elements

Pearson Correlation

n=36	Library Recruitment	Library Civic Skills	Library Engagement	Political Engagement	Outside Recruitment	Outside Civic Skills	Income	Education
Site A								
Visitation	.055	0.127	.226	.123	-.343*	.022	-.039	.073
Civic Space Utilization	.629**	.478**	.891**	.243	.127	.450**	.140	.315
Resource/Service Utilization	.285	-0.105	.347*	-.134	-.167	-.025	.022	.360*
Overall Library Usage	.599**	.355*	.831**	.155	.051	.357*	.121	.368*
Site B								
Visitation	.316**	.355**	.335**	.250*	.111	-.152	.010	.223
Civic Space Utilization	.436**	.618**	.872**	.095	-.169	.045	.083	.194
Resource/Service Utilization	.443**	.344**	.608**	.016	-.010	-.157	.004	.274*
Overall Library Usage	.464**	.558**	.831**	.073	-.123	-.024	.060	.234*
Site C								
Visitation	-.036	.234	.239	.237	.087	.115	-.041	.351*
Civic Space Utilization	.310	.771**	.739**	.249	-.024	.199	-.086	.057
Resource/Service Utilization	.182	.434**	.371*	.165	-.040	.298	-.214	.110
Overall Library Usage	.293	.723**	.677**	.242	-.032	.253	-.140	.081

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

outside engagement, recruitment, and civic skills. Once again, this would indicate that any

support that these library benefits, if they do indeed provide support for users' civic engagement,

do so via a unique social phenomenon. With regard to users' levels of civic engagement, Table

5.21 also shows significant correlation with several CVM elements, as well as a few of the

LACE elements. It is worth note that the index for library benefits that will be used in

multivariate modeling shows significant correlation at all three sites.

Table 5.21
CVM and LACE Correlations
Pearson Correlation

n=36	Library Engagement	Library Recruitment	Library Civic Skills	Library Effect	Civic Engagement
Site A					
Political Engagement	.263	.066	.561**	.356*	.562**
Outside Recruitment	.284	.107	.273	.270	.260
Outside Civic Skills	.444**	.387*	.707**	.610**	.699**
Income	-.002	.195	.152	.130	.187
Education	.119	.239	-.023	.132	.378*
Civic Engagement	.410*	.362*	.613**	.551**	1
Site B					
Political Engagement	.082	-.088	.110	.037	.579**
Outside Recruitment	-.148	-.067	-.040	-.119	.275*
Outside Civic Skills	.017	.110	.094	.096	.324**
Income	-.012	.041	-.103	-.023	.241*
Education	.150	.149	-.124	.101	.266*
Civic Engagement	.166	.183	.325**	.286*	1
Site C					
Political Engagement	.140	.036	.268	.182	.535**
Outside Recruitment	-.099	.224	-.183	.009	.233
Outside Civic Skills	-.111	.042	.251	.084	.411*
Income	-.063	-.402*	-.131	-.295	.253
Education	-.137	-.140	.001	-.127	.280
Civic Engagement	.409*	.195	.166	.328*	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Multivariate Analysis

The bivariate analyses outlined above can expose a great deal about the relationships between various factors modeled here. However, such analyses cannot speak to the causal direction of such relationships. For this reason this dissertation now turns to multivariate analysis for a more complete understanding of these phenomena.

This dissertation will use a series of ordinary least squares regressions to test three explanatory models of civic engagement among library users. First, the SES Model is tested, then the CVM, and then the LACE Model. In addition, the question of endogeneity is addressed and a two-stage least squares regression method is used to test additional explanatory models that assume an endogenous relationship between civic engagement and certain independent variables.

Table 5.22 uses OLS regression analysis to model civic engagement levels as a product of socioeconomic status. As one can see, socioeconomic factors do not provide universal explanatory power across all three locations. In those cases where significant coefficients are seen, there is a lack of consistency across all three survey sites that prevent any comprehensive explanation of respondents' civic engagement levels. Coupled with the relatively low r-squared values of these three models, it can be said that socioeconomic status provides little explanation of library users' civic engagement levels.

Moving on to the CVM provides a challenge in regard to modeling civic engagement at *Site A*. Due to high levels of correlation among CVM and LACE variables, as well as between these variables and civic engagement, it is difficult to model explanatory factors without encountering multicollinearity. As Table 5.23 shows, there exist high levels of correlation between *outside civic skills*, *outside recruitment*, *library civic skills*, *library recruitment*, and *civic engagement*. Moreover, classic symptoms of multicollinearity appear when modeling this

Table 5.22

Explaining Civic Engagement with Socioeconomic Status (OLS Regression)			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	**SE B**	**Beta**
Site A			
n=36 r^2=.177			
(Constant)	8.353	5.227	
Income	.836	1.79	.084
Education	1.663*	.802	.388
Male	-1.245	3.72	-.066
African American	2.961	3.407	.164
Children At Home	-.874	1.761	-.086
Site B			
n=36 r^2=.347			
(Constant)	11.843**	2.478	
Income	1.703**	.639	.350
Education	.432	.474	.110
Male	-2.171	1.612	-.137
African American	4.269**	1.543	.277
Children At Home	-2.699**	.704	-.428
Site C			
n=36 r^2=.138			
(Constant)	11.103	5.837	
Income	.876	.672	.255
Education	.920	.766	.240
Male	-1.832	2.122	-.153
African American	1.386	2.912	.097
Children At Home	-.697	1.088	-.113

**Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

data with regression—explanatory coefficients, which show positive relationships with the dependent variable in the bivariate analysis show negative relationships in the multivariate analysis. Further, large swings in r-squared values and coefficient significance provide additional evidence of multicollinearity.

Table 5.23

n=36	Political Engagement	Library Recruitment	Outside Recruitment	Library Civic Skills	Outside Civic Skills	Income	Education	Civic Engagement
Roots of Multicollinearity at Site A Pearson Correlation								
Political Engagement	1	.066	.233	.561**	.490**	.035	.109	.562**
Library Recruitment	.066	1	.107	.535**	.387*	.195	.239	.362*
Outside Recruitment	.233	.107	1	.273	.515**	.109	.260	.260
Library Civic Skills	.561**	.535**	.273	1	.707**	.152	-.023	.613**
Outside Civic Skills	.490**	.387*	.515**	.707**	1	.195	.198	.699**
Income	.035	.195	.109	.152	.195	1	.333*	.187
Education	.109	.239	.260	-.023	.198	.333*	1	.378*
Civic Engagement	.562**	.362*	.260	.613**	.699**	.187	.378*	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

To deal with the multicollinearity problems posed by *Site A* data, two different OLS regression models are tested. One model omits *outside civic skills* (Model 1) and the other omits *outside recruitment* (Model 2). As Table 5.24 shows, Model 2 is the more robust of the two models tested. The r-squared value is much higher and three of the four explanatory variables (*education*, *political engagement*, and *outside civic skills*) are found to be statistically significant. On the other hand, only one of the explanatory variables (*political engagement*) is significant at the .05 level in Model 1. *Education* is significant at the .10 level, which could indicate that a larger sample would yield significance at the .05 level, but that is merely speculative at this point.

Table 5.24

Site A - Explaining Civic Engagement with the CVM (OLS Regression)			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	**SE B**	**Beta**
Model 1			
n=36 r^2=.424			
(Constant)	-.257	4.031	
Political Engagement	.925**	.252	.515
Outside Recruitment	.085	.209	.059
Income	.683	1.446	.068
Education	1.217†	.639	.284
Model 2			
n=36 r^2=.610			
(Constant)	2.128	3.374	
Political Engagement	.511*	.232	.284
Outside Civic Skills	1.054**	.272	.512
Income	-.049	1.206	-.005
Education	1.061*	.516	.247

†Significant at the .10 level
*Significant at the .05 level
**Significant at the .01 level

Results for the OLS regression models that test the CVM at *Site B* and *Site C* can be seen in Table 5.25. The r-squared values here are slightly lower than *Site A*'s Model 2, but still show adequate predictive power with a reading of .503. In addition, these models show the CVM elements to be significant predictors of civic engagement among library users. Thus, one can conclude that the CVM shows solid predictive power as an overall theory of civic engagement among library users.

Table 5.25

Site A - Explaining Civic Engagement with the CVM (OLS Regression)			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	**SE B**	**Beta**
Site B			
n=36 r^2=.503			
(Constant)	-4.104	2.958	
Political Engagement	.871**	.453	.521
Outside Recruitment	.240*	.114	.189
Outside Civic Skills	.557**	.190	.284
Income	-.763	.559	-.157
Education	1.407**	.416	.357
Site C			
n=36 r^2=.503			
(Constant)	-.975	4.409	
Political Engagement	.653**	.207	.435
Outside Recruitment	.328*	.138	.316
Outside Civic Skills	.624*	.265	.317
Income	.803	.494	.234
Education	.096	.546	.025

**Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.26 shows OLS regression models that test the LACE theory. This is done by simply adding the *library effect* index (discussed in Chapter 3) to the previously outlined CVM models. As one can see, these models show consistently higher r-squared values, and therefore

carry greater predictive value, than their CVM counterparts. In addition, at both *Site B* and *Site C*, the *library effect* is a significant causal factor of the civic engagement levels of respondents.

Unfortunately, there is an alternative explanation for these findings. As mentioned several times previously, and outlined within the work of Verba et al., the possibility of endogeneity within a causal model of civic engagement is worth addressing. As with the approach taken by Verba et al., this study uses two-stage least squares regression to mitigate the effects of endogenous relationships between civic engagement and the causal variables modeled above. In particular, here two-stage least squares regression is used to account for any effect that civic engagement has on civic skills attainment both inside and outside of the library.

"Two-stage least squares [regression] corrects for endogeneity by using instrumental variables that are correlated with the endogenous variables (in our case civic skills) but are not caused by political participation" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 605). As the name suggests, this is accomplished via a two-stage process. In the first stage, one regresses the suspected endogenous variable against all exogenous variables within the given model. The predicted values (instrumental variables) produced in this first stage are then used in place of the actual values of the endogenous variable in the second stage which takes the form of a regular OLS regression. As Woolridge (2009) notes, this methodological approach is best utilized via a statistical software package with a two-stage least squares functionality. For this study, Pearson Correlation is used to identify those variables that correlate with *civic skills*, but not with *civic engagement* to act as instrumental variables. Then SPSS is used to carry out this method.

Table 5.27 shows the results of a two-stage least squares regression approach taken toward those models previously outlined in Table 5.26. As one can see, the r-squared values have remained relatively stable between the OLS and two-stage least squares procedures. Importantly,

outside civic skills are no longer a significant explanatory factor at any of the sites. The *library effect* is also no longer significant for *Site B* at the .01 level. It is significant at the .07 level, which could indicate a larger sample might produce a more significant finding.

Verifying the Hypotheses

The findings shared in this chapter verify H_3 and H_4. The *library effect* is found to be a significant predictor of civic engagement among library users at *Site C*, even when controlling for the possible endogenous relationship between *outside civic skills*, *library civic skills*, and *civic engagement*. Furthermore, findings from this multivariate analysis, along with earlier univariate analyses, point to an increasing *library effect* as one moves from the low to the high end of the *range of library civicness*.

However, while this study's hypotheses may have been confirmed in a technical sense, the researcher is not completely convinced of these findings for a few reasons. First, while the two-stage least squares methodology used herein does control for theorized endogeneity within the LACE model, this phenomenon should be studied in greater detail to confirm the validity of the approach taken here. In fact, it may be the case that additional endogenous relationships exist within the model proposed here—or that no endogenous relationships exist. Second, although the *library effect* is a significant predictive factor at *Site C*, so too is income. This could indicate that the libraries services do not equalize socioeconomic inequalities among library patrons. That is, any users who fall into lower socioeconomic categories may not benefit from the wider range of services provided at *Site C*.

Table 5.26

Explaining Civic Engagement with the LACE Model (OLS Regression)			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	**SE B**	**Beta**
Site A			
n=36 r^2=.627			
(Constant)	1.951	3.354	
Political Engagement	.488*	.231	.272
Outside Civic Skills	.857**	.317	.416
Income	-.072	1.198	-.007
Education	1.056*	.513	.246
Library Effect	.201	.168	.168
Site B			
n=36 r^2=.556			
(Constant)	-4.734	2.827	
Political Engagement	.841**	.146	.503
Outside Recruitment	.283**	.110	.223
Outside Civic Skills	.471**	.184	.240
Income	-.513	.540	-.106
Education	1.225**	.402	.311
Library Effect	.259**	.093	.237
Site C			
n=36 r^2=.604			
(Constant)	-3.49	4.106	
Political Engagement	.510**	.195	.340
Outside Recruitment	.345**	.125	.333
Outside Civic Skills	.604**	.240	.307
Income	1.204**	.472	.351
Education	.219	.498	.057
Library Effect	.292**	.107	.348

**Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined findings from Phase 2 of this research project. In this phase a self-administered library user survey was used to gather individual-level data concerning library

usage, socioeconomic status, and civic engagement. These data are reviewed and analyzed in this

chapter. Findings derived from these data are detailed and their implications discussed.

Univariate analyses shows that, as expected, many key demographic, library usage, and civic

engagement variables associated with the three sample populations correspond to the civicness of

each library. For example, respondent education and income levels increase as one moves from

the lowest to the highest end of the *range of library civicness*. Regular library usage, social

interaction, as well as usage in support of political or civic interest is relatively stable across all

three sites. Respondents' involvement with *programs* and *meetings* increases as we move from

least civic to most civic library. And while average *recruitment* across the 19 *recruitment*

categories was level across *Site A* and *Site B*, there are markedly higher levels of *recruitment* at

Site C (double of *Site A* and *B*).

Bivariate analyses of these user-level data show that with regard to the SES model,

education is the only factor that shows significant correlation with civic engagement—and that is

only at *Sites A* and *B*. When looking at CVM elements, one can see that *civic skills* and *political*

engagement are significant correlates of *civic engagement* across all three Sites. The *library*

effect is also a significant correlate of *civic engagement*. Further, this correlation comes most

notably by way of *civic space utilization* within each library. Drilling down one more level, it is

library civic skills that account for most of this relationship at *Site A* and *Site B*, while *library*

engagement is the most significant factor at *Site C*. Interestingly, these analyses also show that

library recruitment and *library civic skills* do not correlate with the CVM counterparts (*outside*

recruitment and *outside civic skills*), which indicates that these are distinct phenomena.

Multivariate analyses detailed in this chapter show the SES model elements as poor

predictors of civic engagement among library users. On the other hand, OLS regression shows

Table 5.27

Explaining Civic Engagement with the LAC Model (2SLS Regression)			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficie
	B	**SE B**	**Beta**
Site A			
n=36 r^2=.564			
(Constant)	1.031	3.558	
Political Engagement	.629*	.267	.350
Outside Civic Skills	.420	.518	.204
Income	.175	1.255	.017
Education	1.127*	.533	.263
Library Effect	.278	.199	.233
Site B			
n=36 r^2=.512			
(Constant)	-6.678	3.961	
Political Engagement	.833**	.154	.49؟
Outside Recruitment	.242**	.126	.19؟
Outside Civic Skills	.923	.636	.471
Income	-1.081	.945	-.222
Education	1.496**	.554	.380
Library Effect	.219†	.118	.201
Site C			
n=36 r^2=.528			
(Constant)	-1.687	4.765	
Political Engagement	.587**	.218	.391
Outside Recruitment	.345**	.132	.333
Outside Civic Skills	.205	.666	.104
Income	1.052*	.511	.307
Education	.347	.572	.091
Library Effect	.258*	.126	.307

**Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)
†Significant at the .10 level (2-tailed)

Instrumental Variables

Site A: political engagement, income, education, evening survey contact, library resource and service utilization, library visitation, political engagement (efficacy), library recruitment, and library engagement

Site B: political engagement, outside recruitment, income, education, library socialization, civic service utilization, library resource & service utilization, library recruitment, and evening survey contact

Site C: political engagement, outside recruitment, income, education, library socialization, library civic service utilization, library resource and service utilization, library recruitment, and evening survey contact

CVM elements as significant predictors. Using the LACE model, which means simply adding the *library effect* variable to CVM models, shows a slightly higher r-squared statistic and the same CVM elements remain significant causal factors. In addition, the *library effect* is significant at *Site B* and *Site C*.

However, endogeneity is also raised as a concern in this chapter. In particular, the relationship between *civic skills* and *civic engagement* have the potential to skew OLS regression output. In response, this chapter details a two-stage least squares regression method to control for such endogenous relationships. When utilizing this two-stage least squares approach, the *library effect* is only a significant predictor of *civic engagement* at *Site C*.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The previous four chapters of this dissertation have focused on expanding the literature of both librarianship and political science through an examination of the public library's effect on civic engagement among library users. As noted in Chapter 1, this research began as a quest to better understand the democratic role that public libraries play in US society. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicates, there is a long history within the literature of librarianship noting the democratic support provided by public libraries. Further, this literature supports three key claims that concern the public libraries and democracy.

Firstly, the public library movement was founded to serve the egalitarian ideals indicative of the American democratic experience, as interpreted by the four men who were central to the opening of Boston Public Library (America's first modern public library) in 1848. Secondly, professionals within librarianship have continued to champion these foundational values, as evidenced by professional declarations and mission statements that find wide support in libraries. Thirdly, libraries are democratic because the courts tell us they are—there is statutory support for a democratic mission.

While those claims mentioned above do hold water, a noticeable gap in the literature exists with regard to evaluating the public library's quantifiable effect on what is arguably the most important element of democratic governance, which is participation. Democracy requires participation, both political and non-political alike. So Chapter 2 also examines the literature on civic engagement. In particular, two foundational models of civic engagement (the SES and Rational Choice models), as well as the hybrid CVM, are discussed in detail. This leads to the proposal of a testable model of library-augmented civic engagement, as well as four related hypotheses.

Chapter 3 outlined the two-phase research approach utilized for this dissertation. In the first phase, a *range of library civicness* is formulated as a means of quantifying important organizational variations across public libraries. In the second phase, a self-administered library user survey is used to gather individual-level data. All variables and coding procedures used in this research are defined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 details the findings of Phase 1 of this research. Two service vehicles by which public libraries might affect the civic engagement, *programs* and *meetings*, are discussed. A *range of library civicness* is identified and discussed in greater detail. Univariate and multivariate analyses help to show several ways in which public libraries are a reflection of the communities they serve.

Lastly, Chapter 5 shares the findings from Phase 2 of this research. Univariate and bivariate analyses help to confirm the validity of the *range of library civicness* discussed in Chapter 4. Difficulties presented by multicollinearity and endogeneity are discussed. Moreover, both OLS and two-stage least squares regression models are employed to show the causal implications of *library usage* on *civic engagement*.

LACE Model and Hypotheses

As previously mentioned, in reviewing the pertinent literature, a gap was identified in the area of public libraries and civic engagement. More specifically, while normative claims helped to tie public library values and practice to democratic values, there existed no empirical evidence supporting the transfer of library benefits to democratic practice. For this reason, civic engagement was identified as a potentially fruitful avenue by which the narrative of libraries might be connected with the empirical study of democratic practice already in full bloom within political science literature.

In fleshing out a route by which might inject libraries into the literature of civic engagement, three established models of civic engagement were explored: the SES Model, Rational Choice (RC) Model, and the CVM. The CVM clearly offered the most expansive explanatory model for individual-level civic engagement, and was therefore used as a theoretical framework for this research. A model of library-augmented civic engagement (LACE) took shape by placing the library elements of civic space and information within the CVM framework. This provided a point of departure for empirical study within the area of public libraries and democracy. In turn, four hypotheses were offered as a means of guiding this research toward value insight:

H_1: Public libraries are a reflection of the communities they support, and therefore vary across communities. Their offerings are directly affected by available monetary resources, which are directly affected by the overall socio-economic condition of the community itself.

H_2: Due to various factors, most notably the socioeconomic condition of the communities they serve, the "civicness" of public libraries, as defined by their provision of those services that are theoretically linked to increased levels of civic engagement among individuals, differs across communities.

H_3: Through their provision of information, services, and facilities, public libraries augment the required elements of *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* outlined in the CVM described by Verba et al.

H_4: The level of a library's influence on users' civic engagement is dependent upon said library's level of CVM element augmentation (the civicness of said library).

A two-phase approach was adopted to test these hypotheses. H_1 and H_2 were tested via an organizational analysis of Alabama public libraries, which provided an inductive approach conducive to theory building. With findings from this first phase, the LACE model was substantiated and a potential route by which civic engagement could be more substantively explored was established. The level of analysis shifted from the population to the individual in the second phase of this study where H_3 and H_4 were tested via a library user survey conducted at three separate library sites. By investigating the individual-level effects of libraries on the civic engagement levels of their users, this phase of the study provides for the type of foundational empirical evidence to build future studies in this area.

Findings

The organizational analysis of Alabama public libraries showed that the amount of revenue available to libraries correlates significantly with the size of the population being served. This makes sense considering that the size of the service population is the size of the tax base. Further, the larger the tax base, the more money is generated in support of library services. In addition, a high correlation was seen between a library's available revenue and the size of that library's holdings (materials) and usage. Once again, this is an expected finding, as the more revenue available to a library the more materials and services that it can provide.

Interestingly, when per capita measures are used to facilitate an apples-to-apples comparison between libraries, the effect of socioeconomic status becomes more apparent. *Total library revenue (per capita)* correlates significantly with *per capita income* and the average *educational attainment* of each community. In addition, per capita *library usage* levels also correspond to these socioeconomic indicators, meaning that the highest rates of library usage are seen in those communities with the highest *per capita income* and average *educational*

attainment. In other words, we see average library usage rates are higher in those communities comprised of individuals on the higher end of the socioeconomic ladder.

Adding the Civic Array Score to this analysis, which denotes a library's position along the *range of library civicness*, one sees that the portion of these scores that is determined by *programming* significantly correlates with *total library revenue*, while the portion determined by *meetings* correlates with *library revenue (per capita)*, *per capita income*, and *educational attainment*. This means that smaller, more affluent communities have a higher probability of encountering public meetings at their local library, and therefore have a higher probability of attaining civic skills within the library environment. On the other hand, larger service populations seem to command a wider array of library *programming*.

Taken as a whole, findings from the first phase of this research did verify the existence of important organizational variations across public libraries in Alabama. Further, this analysis showed that these variations correlate highly with the monetary resources made available to each library at both the macro (*total library revenue*) and micro (*total library revenue per capita*) levels. These two findings confirm H_1 and H_2, while also providing support for the creation of a *range of library civicness* that should be taken into account during any individual-level study of the library's effect on user engagement.

In the second phase of this research a theory of library-augmented civic engagement is tested. This model, which can be seen in Figure 6.1, shows the public library placed alongside key elements and processes supplied within the CVM. Socioeconomic status, which most notably affects the *resources* element within the CVM finds an additional effect in the LACE model where it also influences the provision of library services. In addition, the LACE model

also reveals the *civic space* and *information* provided by libraries as influential factors affecting those *political engagement* and *recruitment* elements within the CVM.

Figure 6.1
The LACE Model
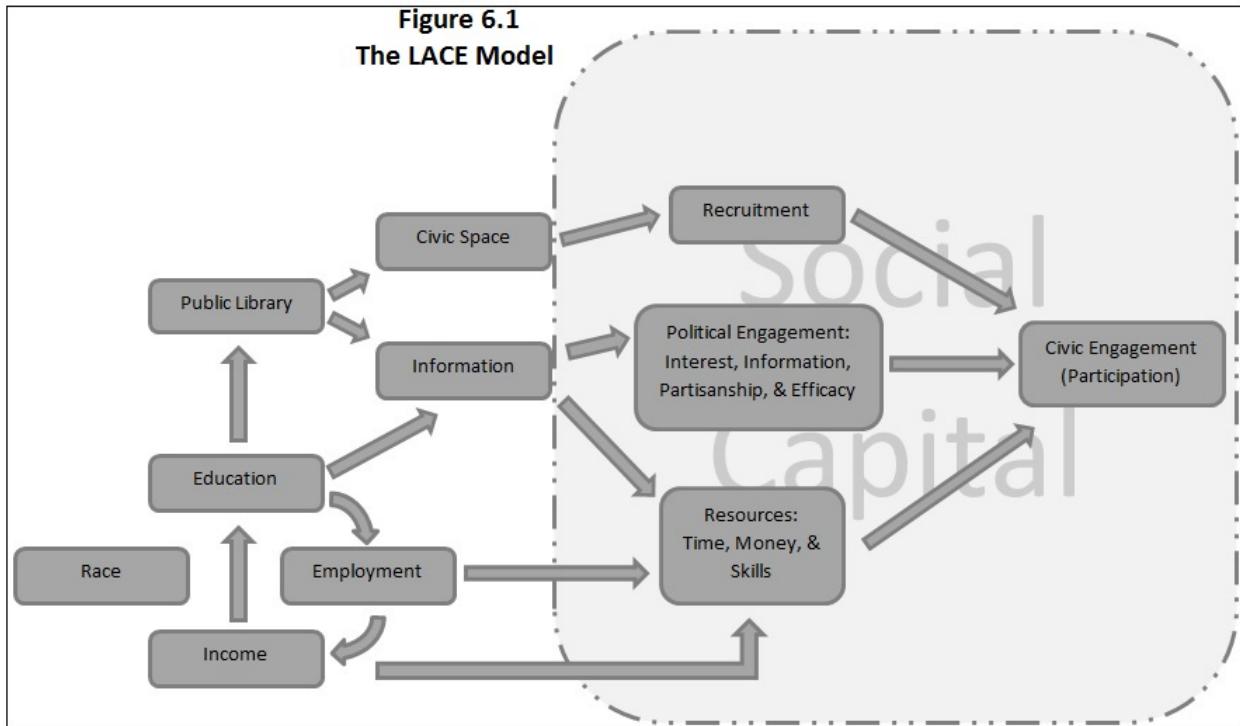
To test the LACE model the level of analysis is shifted from the population to the individual. This makes a great deal of sense, considering this is the level at which *civic engagement* actually occurs. In addition, the *range of library civicness* is used to "control for" those service variations exposed during by this study's organizational analysis. This is done by selecting one library from the highest end of the range (*Site C*), one from the lowest (*Site A*), and one from the middle (*Site B*). Individual-level data collected at each of these three locations are then used to conduct three separate analyses. This approach helps to isolate any effect that might be represented by the each library's civicness, providing a means of comparative study across the aforementioned range[72].

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[72] In addition to isolating the variable effect of library civicness, separate analyses for each library site were required to overcome multicollinearity in regression models that used pooled data from all three library collection sites.

A self-administered library user survey is employed to gather data related to individuals' demographics, library usage, and civic engagement. Univariate analyses of these data showed that, as expected, many key demographic, library usage, and civic engagement variables do seem to correlate with the civicness of each library. For example, *educational attainment* and *income* increase as one moves from the lowest to the highest end of the *range of library civicness*. In addition, involvement with library *programming* and *meetings* also increases while traversing the range in this manner. An individual's involvement with elections, political activism, and general involvement with non-political civic activities follow the same trend.

Bivariate analyses of these user-level data indicate that with regard to the SES model, *education* is the only factor that shows significant correlation with *civic engagement*—and that is only at *Site A* and *Site B*. When examining CVM elements, *resources* (vis-à-vis *civic skills*), *recruitment*, and *political engagement* are significant correlates of *civic engagement* across all three Sites. With regard to the LACE model, which is the CVM with an added *library effect* variable, showed a significant correlation between that *library effect* and *civic engagement*. Further, this correlation comes most notably by way of *civic space utilization* within each library. Drilling down one more level, it is *library civic skills* that account for most of this relationship at *Site A* and *Site B*, while *library engagement* is the most significant factor at *Site C*. Interestingly, these analyses also show that *library recruitment* and *library civic skills* do not correlate with their CVM counterparts (*outside recruitment* and *outside civic skills*), which indicates that these are distinct phenomena.

Regression analyses show that the SES model performs very poorly as an explanatory model of civic engagement at *Site A* and *Site C*, as evidenced by low r-squared readings and the lack of significant coefficients. At *Site B*, *income* and *race* were significant predictors of civic

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engagement. However, both the CVM and LACE models that were subsequently tested offered greater explanatory power.

There are several compound variables used in this study, which are comprised of several closely-related lower-level variables. Moreover, the close relations of these variables result in a high degree of multicollinearity during preliminary regression modeling that utilized these separate sub-variables—especially at *Site A*. These problems most readily surface in the form of: wild swings in regression coefficients and r-square values with removal of certain variables, elevated VIF scores, and coefficient relationships with the dependent variable that should be positive show as negative. So to alleviate these issues, compound variables alone are used in the regression models, rather than those sub-variables that comprise them. And while this eliminates multicollinearity in the models for *Site B* and *Site C*, *Site A* still exhibits problems, mainly due to high correlation between *outside recruitment* and *outside civic skills*. For this reason two different models are tested for *Site A* data—one that omits *outside recruitment* and one that omits *outside civic skills*.

In an OLS regression model that included *recruitment*, but not *civic skills*, only *political engagement* showed significance as a causal factor. However, in the model that incorporated *civic skills* and omitted *recruitment* a much higher r-squared value is seen, and *political engagement*, *outside civic skills*, and *education* become significant causal factors of *civic engagement*. The *library effect*, a combination of *library recruitment*, *library-augmented civic skills*, and *library engagement* (which is the use of library resources to satisfy political or civic interests) did not prove to be a significant factor when testing the LACE model at *Site A*.

OLS regression models using data from *Site B* and *Site C* render results somewhat similar to *Site A*. At both locations, *political engagement*, *outside recruitment*, *outside civic skills*, and

the *library effect* are all significant causal factors of individual-level *civic engagement*. In addition, *education* is significant at *Site B* and *income* at *Site C*.

However, while OLS regression provides support for the LACE theory as an explanatory model of individual-level *civic engagement*, a second potential problem must be addressed. How does one know that *civic engagement* is not driving change in the independent variables of the CVM and LACE model? Utilizing bivariate and auxiliary regression analyses one can see that *civic skills* may be caught up in such an endogenous relationship with *civic engagement*. For this reason, this research followed the lead of Verba et al. to conduct a second round of analyses using two-stage least squares regression. In using this method one can control for endogeneity through a two-stage regression approach that utilizes what are called *instrumental variables* to eliminate any causal factors affected by endogeneity. Instrumental variables correlate with independent variables and not with the dependent variable. In theory, using these variables in a two-stage approach picks up only the causal effect that is not a result of variations in the dependent variable.

The two-stage least squares modeling used in this study shows that *civic skills* are not a causal factor at *Site A*, leaving just *political engagement* and *education* as predictors of *civic engagement*. At *Site B*, the *library effect* was no longer significant at the .05 level, but remained so at the .10 level, which warranted mentioning due to the relatively small sample size used in this exploratory research. For *Site C*, all causal variables that were significant in the OLS model remained so in the two-stage least squares model. These findings partially reaffirm the construct validity of Phase 1. These findings also affirm H_3 and H_4.

Research Implications

The previous literature regarding public libraries and democracy represents a thoughtful discourse centered on the idea that public libraries should be viewed as valuable supports for the freedom of thought and expression that is outlined within the First Amendment to the US Constitution. Indeed, library scholars have made a strong normative case for the public library as a democratic pillar supporting such rights for all people via the provision of civic space and information services. However, this normative case lacks the stability and critical acceptance that an empirical foundation provides.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the current argument for libraries as democratic entities rests on the idea that libraries provide for users an ability to exercise certain freedoms tied to traditional American democratic values. For example, a library user can expect to have access to any type of information or brand of idea that they desire. However, can it be said that the library is truly the locus of democratic ideal in such cases? Rather, it would seem more reasonable to suggest that it is the democratic elements of the parent regime that project this benefit onto these public agencies. That is to say that the American public library is nothing more than a proxy for those democratic ideals dictated by American public policy. Moreover, those freedoms that are often discussed in relation to public libraries should not be seen as phenomenon independent of public policy. For example, consider the fact that public libraries which exist under totalitarian regimes, such as modern-day Iran or Soviet Russia of yesteryear, cannot provide the same sort of democratic support to their users. For an example that hits a bit closer to home, consider how American public libraries under segregation also could not provide such support to all people. For this reason, to speak of the public library as an independent source for democratic protections, in the manner of past library scholarship, is misleading.

This is where this research provides its greatest benefit—in its study of the public library's potential as a true generator of democratic sociopolitical benefits. Further, this research does so by answering the question: Is the American public library merely serving the public with those benefits provided by the democratic political structure under which it functions; or is the public library an active and independent democratic engine that, while requiring a starting push from egalitarian political structures, supports the further proliferation of such democratic benefits independently of said structures? While this question may seem veiled in nuance, this research is predicated on the idea that there is a difference between active and passive democratic support. Further, it is important for both political scientists and librarians alike to what types of democratic support these long-established public agencies provide.

If librarianship expects to establish a legitimate discourse concerning public libraries and democracy, library scholars must incorporate the theories of political science into their discussions. This research has taken the first step toward bridging the gap between the literature of librarianship and political science. In doing so, it has not only expanded the literature of librarianship, but also added a novel dimension to the literature of political science. While there is clearly more work to be done in this area, the LACE model represents a possible answer to the chicken or egg quandary of libraries and democracy which plagues the library literature. Moreover, the discourse within the realm of political science now includes discussion of a public agency that, over the past 150 years, has attempted to position itself to serve the democratic ideals, but has yet to find empirical resolution in such regard.

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Importantly, in adapting political science theory to the narrative of librarianship this study has expanded the research of public administration and policy to provide deeper understandings of the sociopolitical value of this seemingly ubiquitous public entity, which has remained unmentioned in this context within the literature of political science. Additionally, it is the hope of the author that this study can provide a roadmap for other library scholars to follow in their continued support for the normative claims of the past.

Lastly, this research has expanded the literature concerning the Civic Voluntarism Model of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), which has, despite its quality, remained a relatively untapped wellspring for novel study in the area of civic engagement. Moreover, while questions remain as to the public library's ability to provide for those *resources*, *engagement*, and *recruitment* needs called for by the Civic Voluntarism Model, this model is once again affirmed as a quality predictive and explanatory model.

Next Steps

There is still a great deal more study needed. This research must be both expanded and refined in order to arrive at more definitive understandings of public libraries and their ability to support democratic ideals. It seems natural to expand this study to incorporate libraries and populations outside of Alabama. Further, for comparative purposes, it would be interesting to see how non-library users relate or differ from library users in regard to their propensity for civic voluntarism. In the same way, one might investigate individuals who are connected with other public and nonprofit organizations that provide opportunities for individuals to attain the same CVM elements that this research has shown might be attained, or maintained, through regular library use[73]. While previous studies cited herein have been conducted in the areas of volunteer networks (e.g., Caputo, 1997) and religious organizations (e.g., Brown & Brown, 2003; Brown, 2006; Cavendish, 2000), none have used the CVM as a theoretical framework.

For librarians, expansion of this research also means showing public libraries as meaningful players in the sociopolitical environments of the communities they serve—making a case for public libraries as a valuable resource worth popular political, and monetary, support. Supplementary research should focus on providing library managers with ideas for how they can

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[73] i.e., making contact with active recruitment networks or attaining valuable civic skills that translate to greater civic engagement

strengthen their user communities through the provision of services that augment civic engagement, which Putnam et al. argue is the lynchpin of civil society. This could be done by focusing on those public libraries found at the higher end of the *range of library civicness*. In doing so, one can outline the organizational elements necessary for effective services in support of those democratic ideals.

The expansion of this research deeper into the realm of political science might incorporate other theories of civic engagement not fully explored here. For example, although *social capital*, and specifically the work of Putnam et al. (1994), is mentioned briefly in this research, there exists further opportunities to incorporate social capital into the research concerning public libraries and democracy. In the same way that communities and libraries differ across the board, one would also expect social capital to differ across communities. In fact, Putnam et al. (1994) show this to be the case across the communities of Italy. Moreover, the effect of social capital on the provision of CVM elements within the library setting would also make for interesting study.

With regard to methodological refinement within this research, such efforts should focus on improving the current survey approach to allow for better identification and control of endogenous relationships. More specifically, the survey used in this research should be refined to incorporate additional indicators that can be used as instrumental variables for a two-stage least squares regression approach. Additional survey questions are needed regarding respondents' involvement with other types of civic voluntarism, as well as informal political activities. Furthermore, additional data should be gathered outside of the library setting for a more meaningful comparative study of library users and non-users.

Lastly, in addition to methodological refinements aimed at quantitative analyses, there would be great benefit to incorporating more qualitative elements into this research. As the work of Putnam et al., Oldenburg (1989), Bushman (2003), McCabe (2001), and others show, democracy can be more complex than the traditional view offered by theorists such as Robert Dahl. Democracy can be more than decision rules and legal rights; indeed, it can be seen as the day to day life of a people free from domination and control. While it does occur in overt, systematic civic displays such as elections or demonstrations at the macro level, it also occurs at the micro level within a city's parks, cafes, and libraries.

Utilizing a qualitative interview approach might help to flesh out more of the micro-level detail that would better explain the manner in which democratic ideals are supported within the library setting. Such an approach would take the form of individual interviews among library users and non-users alike. Such research would not only study those concepts broached within this study, but would also incorporate the concepts of *social capital* and *third place*. With luck, this research would provide a means to derive best practices for libraries in seeking to proactively support the democratic needs of the communities they serve.

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Library Bill of Rights[75]

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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[74] Retrieved from: http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill (December, 2012)
[75] Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

A Gateway to Knowledge

Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.

The Public Library

The Public Library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services

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[76] Retrieved from: http://www.unesco.org/webworld/libraries/manifestos/libraman.html (December, 2012)

and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressure.

Missions of the Public Library

The following key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture should be at the core of public library services:

1. creating and strengthening reading habits in children at an early age;

2. supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;

3. providing opportunities for personal creative development;

4. stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;

5. promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;

6. providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;

7. fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;

8. supporting the oral tradition;

9. ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;

10. providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;

11. facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills;

12. supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.

Funding, legislation and networks

The Public Library shall in principle be free of charge. The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments. It has to be an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education.

To ensure nationwide library coordination and cooperation, legislation and strategic plans must also define and promote a national library network based on agreed standards of service.

The public network must be designed in relation to national, regional, research and specific libraries as well as libraries in schools, colleges and universities.

Operation and management

A clear policy must be formulated, defining objectives, priorities and services in relation to the local community needs. The public library has to be organized effectively and professional standards of operation must be maintained.

Cooperation with relevant partners - for example, user groups and other professionals at local, regional, national as well as international level - has to be ensured.

Services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and

sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies outreach services for those unable to visit the library.

The library services must be adapted to the different needs of communities in rural and urban areas.

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.

Outreach and user education programmes have to be provided to help users benefit from all the resources.

The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom

Meeting in Glasgow on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its formation, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) declares that:

IFLA proclaims the fundamental right of human beings both to access and to express information without restriction.

IFLA and its worldwide membership support, defend and promote intellectual freedom as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This intellectual freedom encompasses the wealth of human knowledge, opinion, creative thought and intellectual activity.

IFLA asserts that a commitment to intellectual freedom is a core responsibility of the library and information profession worldwide, expressed through codes of ethics and demonstrated through practice.

IFLA affirms that:

- Libraries and information services provide access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers. They serve as gateways to knowledge, thought and culture, offering essential support for independent decision-making, cultural development, research and lifelong learning by both individuals and groups.

- Libraries and information services contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights.

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[77] Retrieved from: http://www.ifla.org/publications/the-glasgow-declaration-on-libraries-information-services-and-intellectual-freedom (December, 2012)

Consequently, they are committed to offering their clients access to relevant resources and services without restriction and to opposing any form of censorship.

- Libraries and information services shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society. The selection and availability of library materials and services shall be governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.

- Libraries and information services shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users. There shall be no discrimination for any reason including race, national or ethnic origin, gender or sexual preference, age, disability, religion, or political beliefs.

- Libraries and information services shall protect each user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

IFLA therefore calls upon libraries and information services and their staff to uphold and promote the principles of intellectual freedom and to provide uninhibited access to information.

This Declaration was prepared by IFLA/FAIFE. Approved by the Governing Board of IFLA 27 March 2002, The Hague, Netherlands. Proclaimed by the Council of IFLA 19 August 2002, Glasgow, Scotland.

Appendix D – Informed Consent Statement

You are invited to participate in a research study to help provide better understanding of civic engagement and public library use. This study is being conducted by Kevin Walker, PhD candidate in the Auburn University Department of Political Science. You have been selected because of your residential status (where you live), and because you are over the age of 19.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete the following short survey. You total time commitment will be approximately 15-20 minutes.

All information gathered by this study will be completely anonymous. For this reason, you will NOT be asked to verify your consent with a signature. Instead, by completing the survey you acknowledge that: (a) you are over the age of 19 and (b) you consent to participate in this study. You may stop taking this survey at any time. You may also withdraw the information you have provided at a later time by contacting Kevin Walker at the email address below. Please keep this page of the survey for your records. Should you decide to withdraw your participation, you will need to provide the researcher with the code at the top of the page for information identification purposes.

If you have any questions about this study, please ask them now, or contact Kevin Walker at kevinwadewalker@gmail.com, or Dr. Mitchell Brown at (334) 844-6170.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

Thank you so much for your participation!

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Kevin W. Walker

Appendix E – Library User Survey

1. During the past 12 months, how often have you visited the public library?

- ( ) Never
- ( ) Rarely
- ( ) Sometimes
- ( ) Often

2. When you visit the public library, how often do you engage in the following activities?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Check out a book	( )	( )	( )	( )
Check out a movie	( )	( )	( )	( )
Access the internet	( )	( )	( )	( )
Receive help from library staff	( )	( )	( )	( )
Attend a library program or event	( )	( )	( )	( )
Attend the meeting of a club or social group	( )	( )	( )	( )
Take part in a meeting where decisions are made	( )	( )	( )	( )
Lead a meeting where decisions are made	( )	( )	( )	( )

Any other activities that have been ommitted (what are they and how often do you engage in them)?

[text box]

3. How often do you obtain the following information at the library?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Information about political issues	( )	( )	( )	( )
Information about local events (events not associated with the library)	( )	( )	( )	( )
Information about government programs (ex: Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, etc.)	( )	( )	( )	( )

Tell me about your social interactions at the library:

4. When you visit the library, how often do you engage in conversation?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
With other library users	○	○	○	○
With library staff	○	○	○	○

If you answered "Never" to both parts of the previous question, please skip to #6.

5. In your conversations with other library users and library staff, do you ever discuss (select all that apply):

	Other Library Users	Library Staff
Books or movies	☐	☐
Work	☐	☐
Your family	☐	☐
Personal issues	☐	☐
Local politics or social issues	☐	☐
National politics or social issues	☐	☐

Any other topics (please specify)?

[text box]

6. Have you ever been asked by other library users, library staff, or by someone outside of the library (family, friend, etc.) to take part in any of the following activities (select all that apply):

	Other Library Users	Library Staff	Outside of the Library
Taking part in a protest	☐	☐	☐
Signing a petition	☐	☐	☐
Writing a letter to the local newspaper	☐	☐	☐
Voting in an election	☐	☐	☐
Joining a library group	☐	☐	☐
Joining some other group outside the library	☐	☐	☐
Volunteering time to help the library in some way	☐	☐	☐
Volunteering time to help some other organization	☐	☐	☐
Donating money to the library	☐	☐	☐
Donating money to some other organization	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a politician at the federal level	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a politician at the state level	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a politician at the local level	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a federal official (someone not elected)	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a state official (someone not elected)	☐	☐	☐
Contacting the office of a local official (someone not elected)	☐	☐	☐
Attending a political meeting (examples: rally for a candidate, political party gathering, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Attending a civic meeting (examples: school board, city council, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Attending a social meeting (examples: bowling league, book club, etc.)	☐	☐	☐

7. How interested are you in LOCAL politics or government (things politicians discuss, issues of a public interest, etc.)?

◯ No interest at all
◯ Very little interest
◯ Moderately interested
◯ Very interested

8. How interested are you in NATIONAL politics or government (things politicians discuss, issues of a public interest, etc.)?

◯ No interest at all
◯ Very little interest
◯ Moderately interested
◯ Very interested

9. Which of the following groups do you most closely identify yourself with:

◯ Republican
◯ Democrat
◯ Tea Party
◯ Independent

Other (please specify)

[   ]

10. How strong would you say your connection is with the group you just identified in the previous question?

◯ Weak
◯ Moderate
◯ Strong
◯ Very Strong

11. If you took a complaint to your LOCAL government, how much attention would they give you?

◯ No attention at all
◯ Very little attention
◯ Some attention
◯ A lot of attention

12. If you took a complaint to your NATIONAL government, how much attention would they give you?

◯ No attention at all

◯ Very little attention

◯ Some attention

◯ A lot of attention

13. How much influence do you think someone like yourself can have on decisions your LOCAL government makes?

◯ No influence at all

◯ Little influence

◯ Some influence

◯ A lot of influence

14. How much influence do you think someone like yourself can have on decisions your NATIONAL government makes?

◯ No influence at all

◯ Little influence

◯ Some influence

◯ A lot of influence

15. Who is the governor of Alabama?

16. Who is Alabama's Secretary of State?

17. Who are the two US senators from Alabama?

Senator 1

Senator 2

18. How long is a US senator's term of office?

19. Which political party currently has more members in the US House of Representatives?

20. What is the minimum number of electoral votes currently required to win the US presidency?

21. Are you registered to vote in the county in which you live?

◯ Yes

◯ No

22. Since turning 18, in how many presidential elections have you voted?

◯ In all of them

◯ In most of them

◯ In some of them

◯ In very few of them

◯ In none of them

◯ I have not yet had the opportunity to vote

23. Since turning 18, in how many other federal elections have you voted (for example: midterm elections for congressman, federal judges, or other officials)?

◯ In all of them

◯ In most of them

◯ In some of them

◯ In very few of them

◯ In none of them

◯ I have not yet had the opportunity to vote

24. Since turning 18, in how many state elections have you voted (for governor, legislators, etc.)?

◯ In all of them

◯ In most of them

◯ In some of them

◯ In very few of them

◯ In none of them

◯ I have not yet had the opportunity to vote

25. In the past 4 years, have often have you volunteered your time to political campaigns?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

26. In the past 4 years, how often have you contacted the office of an elected official?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

27. In the past 4 years, how often have you signed a petition?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

28. In the past 4 years, how often have you taken part in protests?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

29. In the past 4 years, how often have you attended political rallies?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

30. In the past 4 years, how often have you attended a meeting of, or made a financial contribution to, a political group (group that takes political stands on issues – for example: the NRA, service clubs such as the Lions or Kiwanis, Religious Organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, organizations for the elderly, organizations that represent the nationality or ethnic group to which you most closely identify, organizations that represent general liberal or conservative causes, literary, art or discussion groups, girl or boy scouts, neighborhood association, etc.)

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

31. In the past 4 years, how often have you contributed money to political campaigns or candidates?

○ I have not contributed any money

○ I have contributed during very few elections

○ I have contributed during some elections

○ I have contributed during most elections

○ I have contributed during every election

32. In the past 12 months, how often have you attended church services?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

33. In the past 12 months, how often have you attended meetings for social/recreational organizations (e.g., bowling league, softball team, martial arts club, etc.)?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

34. In the past 12 months, approximately how many hours have you volunteered within your local community?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

35. In the past 12 months, how often have you attended meetings in which you took part in decision-making (at work, for a club you belong to, at your child's school, etc.)?

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

36. How often have you led these meetings?

○ Not Applicable

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

37. How often do these meetings take place at the public library?

○ Not Applicable

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

38. In the past 12 months, how often have you taken a leadership role (volunteer or professional) within any organizations (e.g., a supervisor at your work, a deacon in your church, the president of a neighborhood association, etc.)?

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

39. How often do these organizations meet at the public library?

◯ Not Applicable

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

40. In the past 12 months, how often have you written letters to organizational officials about an issue important to you (letter to the editor, a politician, a company who sold you a product you weren't happy with)?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

41. How often have you used public library resources (books, papers, internet access, computers, etc.) to help write such letters?

◯ Not Applicable

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

42. In the past 12 months, how often have you engaged in public speaking (at work, church, or in connection to some other group of which you are a member)?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

43. How often has this public speaking taken place at the library?

◯ Not Applicable

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Often

44. What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

Other (please specify)

[   ]

45. What is your race/ethnicity (check all that apply)?

☐ African American

☐ White

☐ Latino/hispanic

☐ Asian

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ Native American

Other (please specify)

[   ]

46. What is your age?

[   ]

47. Which of the categories below best described your educational background:

○ Some high school

○ High school graduate

○ Some trade school

○ Trade school graduate

○ Some college

○ College graduate

○ Some graduate school

○ Graduate Degree

48. Which of the following categorizes best describes your household income:

◯ Less than $20k per year

◯ $21-40k per year

◯ $41-60k per year

◯ $61-80k per year

◯ $81-100k per year

◯ $101-120k per year

◯ Over $120k per year

49. How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?

[   ]

You have finished the survey! Thank you so much for taking part in this research study. Please retain the front page of the survey (consent statement) and feel free to contact me with any questions you may have in the future.